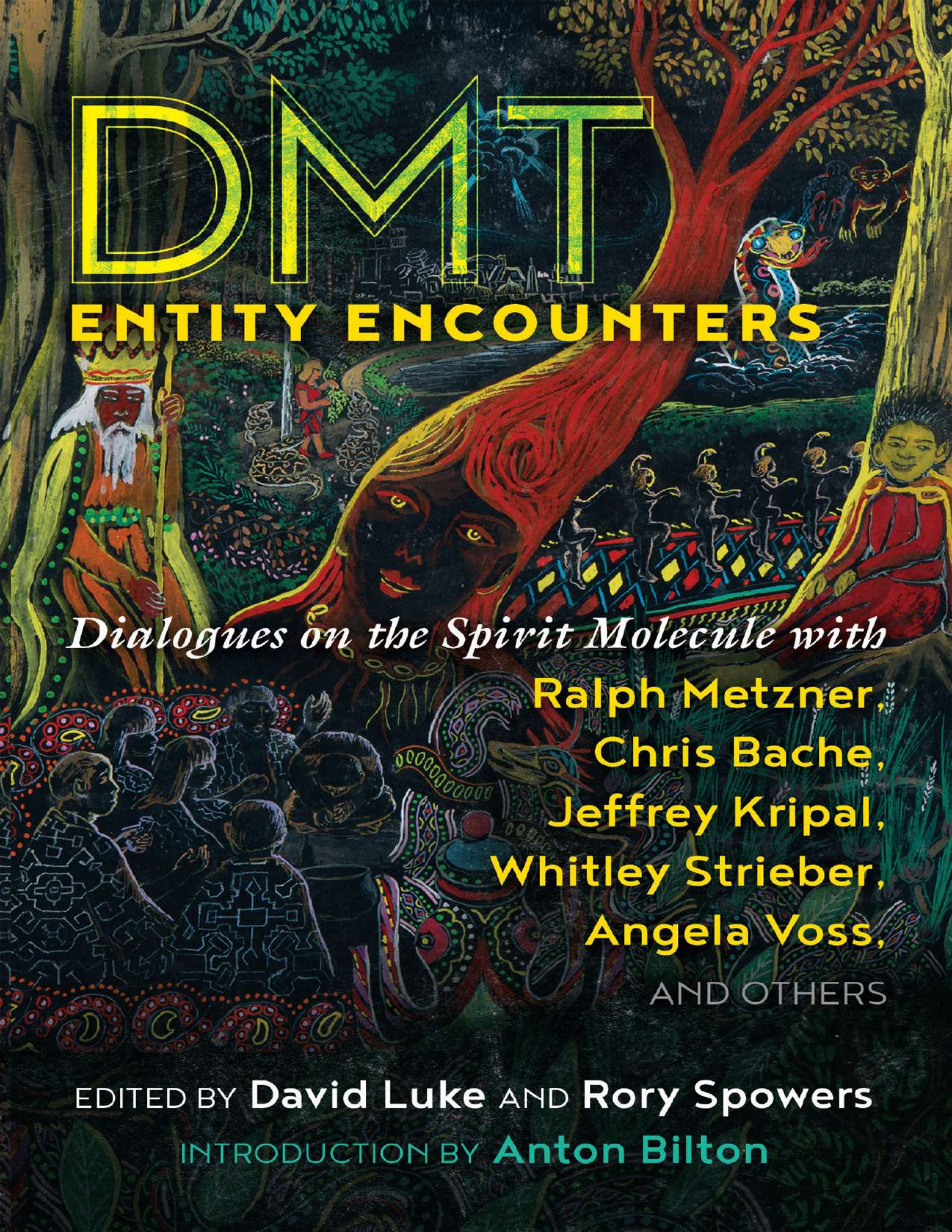
DMT
ENTITY ENCOUNTERS
Dialogues on the Spirit Molecule with
Ralph Metzner,
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AND OTHERS
EDITED BY David Luke AND Rory Spowers
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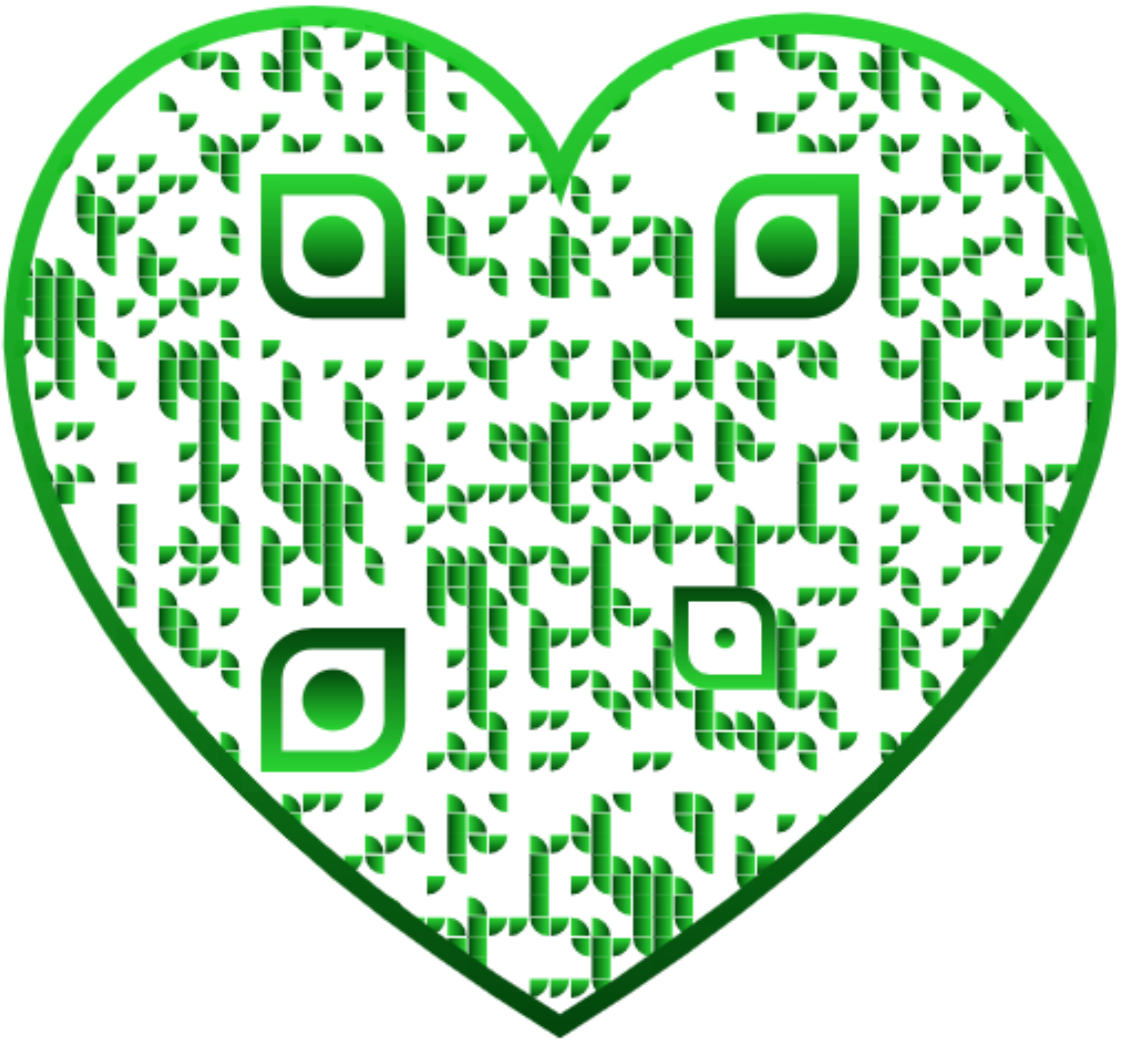

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FOREWORD

About the Exploring Entheogenic Entity Encounters Symposium

Rory Spowers and David Luke

In the early summer of 2017, eleven of the world's leading luminaries noted for exploring the mysteries of encounter experiences such as those arising spontaneously or through spiritual practice, or from potent psychedelic compounds such as dimethyltryptamine (DMT) and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), gathered, along with a number of multidisciplinary discussants, in the United Kingdom at Tyringham Hall, the spectacular home of Anton Bilton, patron of consciousness research projects. Over four days, these open-minded explorers discussed the notion of encounters with apparently discarnate entities.

DMT Entity Encounters, the follow-up book to DMT Dialogues, which covered the first meeting on this subject, The Entheogenic Plant Sentience Symposium at Tyringham Hall in 2015, continues to give a potent distillation of the exchange of ideas among these leading thinkers from around the world—experts in anthropology, clinical psychology, psychedelic psychotherapy, neuroscience, physics, cosmology, theology, philosophy, the study of religions and esotericism, and personal encounters with seemingly otherworldly beings. Presenters included Luis Luna,

Michael Winkelman, Ralph Metzner, Chris Timmermann, William Richards, Whitley Strieber, Angela Voss, Bernard Carr, Chris Bache, Jeffrey Kripal, and Daniel Pinchbeck. Giancarlo Canavesio, John A. Chavez, Anton Bilton, Rory Spowers, David Luke, Carina Cooper, Vimal Darpan, Ede Frecska, Guy Harriman, Dennis McKenna, Linda Patchen, Jerry Patchen, Judith Way, and Patrick Vernon participated in discussions alongside the invited speakers.

This edited collection of presentations and discussions describes a wide spectrum of perspectives that have arisen within this field, ranging from indigenous Amazonian wisdom regarding such entity encounters alongside that of alien abductees and the Neoplatonists, to theories around innate mental modules and the incorporation of insights from neurobiological research and DMT brain-imaging studies. What has emerged from this second extraordinary meeting of minds is no less seismic in its implications than that of the first meeting; these encounter experiences have accompanied humans for millennia and continue to ruffle the edges of what we assume to be reality, and despite our expertise from so many domains of intellectual pursuit, their true identity remains mysterious. Indeed, we are reminded once again of the inscription in the theosophical Temple of Music in the garden at Tyringham Hall, "In Quest of Truth—seek truth, but remember that behind all the new knowledge the fundamental issues of life will remain veiled."

Through staging the initial symposium in 2015, the Tyringham Initiative was born, a world-class think tank or "Modern Mystery School" that believes the synthesis of science and spirit, and even direct experience of the divine, to be fundamental to reshaping our worldview. At a time when multiple scientific disciplines, from quantum physics to neuroscience, are converging on the core truth and mystic vision of the perennial philosophy —that consciousness may indeed be primary and not secondary to matter— the role played by a compound such as DMT seems ever more crucial to explore.

We would like to thank the following individuals for their help with the symposium: Max Baring, Thomas Wirthensohn, and Giancarlo Canavesio for documenting it all on film; Lisa Laffague for helping smooth the way; Maya Bracknell Watson, Pascal Michael, and Aimee Tollan for the transcription of the talks and discussions; and all the staff of the Tyringham Initiative for looking after us.

PREFACE

Symposium Objectives

David Luke

DMT is a simple organic molecule present in an extremely wide range of animals and probably all plants, though curiously not fungus, which in true mycelial style has its own version: 4-HO-DMT. That DMT is also naturally occurring in humans is no doubt part of why it is so often experientially considered to be the strongest and strangest of all psychedelics, delivering half of all high-dose users to new, yet curiously familiar, alien worlds where sentient nonhuman beings await to greet them: “Welcome back, we missed you.” Few experiencing these phenomena report anything less than a world seeming more real than this one.

Science explores, charts, navigates, discovers, and increasingly comprehends the physical world both macro and micro. It pushes the limits of outer space, yet is asleep at the wheel of our outward-thrusting vehicle, giving scant regard to mapping inner space, which is both within the universe and our personal container of it. And yet what could be a more important scientific research question in a materialistic world than locating, verifying, and communicating with beings apparently far more intelligent and knowledgeable than we are? Given that $100 million was recently provided to boost the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence Research Project, also known as SETI, wouldn’t we expect any project that already has half its researchers reporting positive communications equally if not more worthy of investigation? But where are all the research grants, the

scientific papers, the scientists and experts? Ah, there you are! All ten of you. Welcome back, we missed you!

The question of DMT beings, of plant sentience, of interspecies communication, of discarnate consciousness, of perhaps even dialoguing with the divine—these are surely some of the most important of all research questions. They cut to the heart of the nature of reality itself. The precise tool for this research has been available for more than fifty years, but the academy has left it in the pencil jar in the secretary's office, hiding in plain sight.

So what steps should be made on our road to discovery? What is the role of DMT in plant-human coevolution, and what is its origin? Can we verify this other world and these other beings? Is the DMT world just delusional? Is our imagination more tricksy and infinite than we give it credit for . . . or are these beings somehow real? If real, then what are their intentions, and what is our relationship to them? Is it time to establish an interdimensional embassy or to barricade our minds against "the other"? Or are we just finding a new way to dialogue with our (higher?) self? In any case, what can be learned from the beings and from DMT and our study of it, anthropologically, culturally, psychologically, linguistically, pharmacologically, medically, evolutionarily, heuristically, and epistemologically? Or does all this exploration just generate more questions than answers, a chimeric rabbit hole more labyrinthine than our crenulated brain will allow us to fathom and more obscure than dark matter? Maybe we will find out.

INTRODUCTION

The Marrying of Science and Spirituality

Anton Bilton

Today we have the psychedelic keys and the associated laboratory technology to better examine the arena of communion with spirit and to better explore the notion that mind may well have come before matter.

We have rediscovered substances that allow conscious access to other realms and simultaneously we have technology and scientific methodology that can investigate these experiences and test whether these realities truly exist.

This is not new work. The ancients of Eleusis and Egypt did exactly the same work—the priests fulfilling the role of today's scientists in their method of inquiry. They tested and tried their entheogens, it wasn't just a belief-based system, they were experiential in their quests. Truly examining the experience of the "other" and assessing its insights and profferings. At the time, it was the greatest work an intellectual searcher could do and ancient religious scriptures are full of these endeavors.

The purpose of the dialogues at this Symposium is to reinvigorate this union between science and spirituality and take it to both an experiential and experimental level. We need to thoroughly assess these experiences and create experiments to test their validity. And we can do this. Our

methodology involves taking six brave psychonauts, in separated laboratory conditions, and testing them for telepathy, tele-vision, mutual communion, visual landscape corroboration, and eventual correlated mutual communion with alternate sentient presences—beings—within the domain of mindspace.

For what can be more important in this time of self-induced ecological destruction than effective connection to divinity—to the Gods—to seek advice and ask for guidance? To inspire our leaders to seek guidance too—as the ancients did. To bring reverence to this communion and teach our brothers and sisters to act accordingly. To bring the light of spiritual communion to what is currently a dark world, and seek help, so that we won't self-destruct but will instead flourish and evolve into the highest potential of our human being.

So please consider this while reading the fascinating transcripts of these dialogues and help us with our intention to devise experiments to validate what anyone ever taking these substances subjectively corroborates. There is no more important work known to man.

NASA can continue spending billions searching for extraterrestrial life—yet for those initiated in these substances, the inner-terrestrial or "mindspace" offers far greater opportunity for communion with alternate intelligences. It is that arena that we need to resurrect and bring to prominence, with reverence, if we are to seek help to save our world.

CHAPTER 1

On Encounters with Entities in the Ayahuasca Realm

A Phenomenological View

Luis Eduardo Luna

First of all, a biographical note: I'm Colombian, from Florencia, in the Colombian Amazon, which during the first years of my life still had no running water or electricity. In 1971 I met Terence McKenna. I had spent seven years in Spain, and then went back to Florencia for holidays, when I met him in a bar. He and Don Apolinar Yacanamijoy—an Ingano shaman who I met when I was a child—are two people who were very important for me. They really pushed me into this field. I had been in a seminar in Bogotá and had been sent to Spain to study philosophy and theology. After two and a half years, I left the monastery and went to study literature in Madrid, where I converted to a new religion—militant atheism. It was during the time of dictator Francisco Franco. When I met Terence, I was already a militant atheist, but all this was completely crushed when I had my encounters with the plants.

The first one was cannabis. At the time I was so ignorant of the plants that I thought cannabis was very interesting, but I thought that marijuana was really bad.

[audience laughs]

I had no idea they were the same thing. It was Terence who first told me about yajé, and then my father confirmed, "Yes, of course, he knew about yajé." Yajé is the combination of *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Diplopterys cabrerana,* two Malpighiaceae vines. This is what William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg wrote about in *The Yage Letters,* although when Allen Ginsberg was in Pucallpa he drank ayahuasca, not yajé. Yajé is used in the Colombian and Ecuadorian Amazonian region. Ayahuasca is the combination of *Banisteriopsis caapi* and *Psychotria viridis* used in Peru and Brazil. Both *Psychotria viridis* and *Diplopterys cabrerana* contain DMT and are used by many indigenous tribes in the Upper Amazon, the triangle formed by the Rios Negro and Madeira and the Andes mountain chain. When I wrote my doctoral dissertation, I found about seventy-two indigenous groups that used or still use either ayahuasca or yajé. It seems that the original area of *Banisteriopsis caapi* use was around the Rio Orinoco, then it spread out to other regions.

Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff 's work was absolutely crucial in the understanding of the role of yajé and ayahuasca among some Amazonian indigenous populations. His book *Amazonian Cosmos,* written in Bogotá in 1971, was based on his collaboration with just one informant, a Desana Indian called Antonio Guzmán originally from the Macú-Paraná River basin in the Colombian Vaupés region. Reichel-Dolmatoff realized the importance of *caapi* (the Tukano name of the beverage) in the narratives, the iconography, and the religion in general of this Amazonian tribe. Later Reichel-Dolmatoff went to visit the Barasana—another Tukano group—and had an experience himself with yajé and recorded and transcribed that encounter. I think that he only did it once, but his attitude set an example. He realized all the iconography of the Barasana, and the narratives, are about the spirit world, accessed with caapi.

In the Amazon they have the belief that every species has a master spirit. They have a master of animals, master of fish, master of different plants, and so the shaman is dealing with these entities, with these masters of plants. Not the individual plant, but the spirit of the whole plant species. For instance, among the Achuar, Nunkui is the mother of all cultivated plants. You find this idea everywhere in the Amazon. Among the Siona, they have very sophisticated geometrical face painting, and this is all based

on what they see in their experiences with yajé. The spirits appear themselves with different facial paintings that they reproduce; they say that this is what the face painting of the spirits looks like. All the art and narratives of the Siona, again, are based on the experiences, as it is also with the art of the Kashinawa or the Shipibo. It is all related to their experiences. Among the Kashinawa, for example, they say that all the visions are in the skin of the Great Serpent, everything is there.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, a Brazilian anthropologist, authored a series of very interesting essays. He wrote, "In mythical times, animal, plants, and humans were all persons, able to transform. They were all shamans." You find this idea in old narratives. In the beginning everyone was a person: "The original condition common to humans and animals is not animality but rather humanity. Shamans are able to see nonhuman beings as they see themselves, as human, those playing the role of acting interlocuters in specific dialogues," wrote de Castro. Phillipe Descola, a French anthropologist, wrote, "A cosmology where the majority of plants and animals are included in a community of persons sharing most of the faculties, behavior, and moral codes ordinarily granted to humans hardly meet the criteria of [nature/culture] opposition." For them, everything is culture.

In Western science it's all about being objective, taking away the subject so you have full objectivity. Amerindian shamanism seems to be guided by the reverse principle, the opposite idea. To know is to personify, to take the point of view of that which is to be known, or rather *who,* for shamanic knowledge envisages something that is someone—another subject or agent. The other takes the form of a person. So, I think that one of the basic ideas of shamanism is, in order to learn something, you become what you want to learn from. So, knowledge is becoming, transforming into. Don José Coral—one of the *ayahuasqueros* that I worked with—while cooking ayahuasca, he showed me the bubbles emerging from the pot. He said, "You see, these are all people."

This idea in shamanism is very important, because these persons can take different clothes, and so a shaman is able to transform into other animals, or an animal can present himself as a person, as a human being. The idea of transformation is found all over Central and South America in the iconography. Once you understand the idea of shamanic transformation

then a lot of Amerindian art makes sense. You find this idea of transformation everywhere. For instance, among the Shipibo the entities sing these songs, the shaman listens to and sings the songs, and the women somehow translate the songs into patterns that appear in their art. We could say that, in a way, these are musical entities appearing in this patterned iconography. Angelika Gebhart-Sayer, who did research among the Shipibo, wrote that these patterns are some sort of representation of musicality (not specific representations of songs, as has been wrongly interpreted). I was able to confirm this idea when I was doing fieldwork among the Shipibo. I was keeping the diet required when learning with ayahuasca with Don Basilio Gordon, the shaman, who at the end of a month told me, "Now I'm going to prepare you to go back to the world, to Pucallpa." He started to sing. He said, "I'm singing an *arcana* on you, a protection." I asked him, "What is that?" He took one of the patterned Shipibo clothes on the floor of the hut and said, "I'm putting this on you."

Jean Langdon, who has been working with the Siona for many years, wrote, "The yajè experience is not one of individual random visions or free association of the unconscious while under the drug's influence. It is, rather, an ordering of the induced visions into culturally meaningful symbols and experiences, thus gaining increased control over the visions and event occurring." So, the visionary experience is not simply seeing things, but they are codified. Jean told me that usually the Siona take yajé for three nights in a row, but before the session they agree where they will go: "OK, tonight we are going to the third river in the second heaven." There are specific songs and body paintings for each of those realms.

My first yajé experience, in 1971, was without a shaman. We were four people: Terence; Erica, Terence's girlfriend at that time; Kalman, a Hungarian ex-football player; and me. The second one was seven years later, when I again went back to Colombia for the holidays. It was with Don Apolinar Yacanamijoy, the Ingano shaman I mentioned before, who was living in Yurayacu, some seventy kilometers from Florencia. That experience completely blew my mind. I felt I was transformed into a serpent. One of the things I asked Don Apolinar the day after the ceremony was, "Why do you take yajé, Don Apolinar?" He said, "It is to see all those animals *out there*." I am only beginning to understand this idea. I think that is one of the reasons why Rick Strassman, Slawek Wojtowicz, Ede Frecska, and I put the title to our book *Inner Paths to Outer Space,* because of the

possibility in your trips to be able to see the world *out there* reflected in you.

I had planned to make a film about Apolinar, but he died a month before my scheduled trip to Colombia. I went to visit Terence in Sebastopol, California. He told me, "Go to Iquitos." So, I went to Iquitos, I met Don Emilio Andrade Gómez, and in fact I discovered the *vegetalista* tradition of the Peruvian Amazon. I made a film called *Don Emilio and His Little Doctors,* which somebody put on YouTube. It's probably the first film on ayahuasca. In it I documented the whole procedure of preparing ayahuasca. During my time with Don Emilio I followed how he treated his patients, what plants he was using, some of which I collected, and so on. Don Emilio was the person who told me a key concept, the concept of plant teacher. He said, "Ayahuasca, tobacco, *Brugmansia,* all these are doctors, because you learn from them."

I was living in Finland then, but I continued doing fieldwork every summer. I was particularly interested in *la dieta*. I thought, *What happens when you do the diet?* So, I did it myself. Even though I am Amazonian, I think that I was the first educated Westerner to do the proper diet, which means isolation and very restricted food intake while taking ayahuasca. In 1984 my paper "The Concept of Plants as Teachers among Four Mestizo Shamans of Iquitos, Northeast Peru" was published in the *Journal of Ethnopsychopharmacology.* It was also published in German, Spanish, and French. Jean-Pierre Chaumeil found the same idea among the Yagua of Peru and Colombia, who told him that the plants are the real path of knowledge; "Le vrai chemin de la connaissance," he wrote. When I was doing fieldwork in Colombia among the Kamsá in the Sibundoy Valley I found exactly the same idea—the garden of the shaman is *el jardín de la ciencia,* the garden of science. "These plants are teaching you," they used to say, "these plants are *our* university."

I wrote my doctoral dissertation for the Department of Comparative Religion of Stockholm University about the vegetalista tradition. The next thing that happened was meeting Pablo Amaringo through Dennis McKenna. We had gone together to Pucallpa to collect plants for Botanical Dimensions, a botanical garden in Hawaii. Dennis introduced Pablo to me. For me it was quite a discovery. Pablo knew a lot about the vegetalista tradition. He told me that he had been an ayahuasquero, and he knew about

many of the plants in this tradition. He then showed us some landscapes he had painted with watercolor on cheap paper. I was totally surprised by his detailed knowledge of plants and animals. He told me, “I remember everything I have seen.” Then I asked him, “Do you remember the visions you had when you were taking ayahuasca?” He said, “Yes I do.” He made two paintings, giving Dennis and me one of them.

I went back to Helsinki with my painting of his ayahuasca vision. It was very different from what I had seen or heard about the indigenous world. There were creatures of all kinds, with very strange clothes. There was even what seems to be a flying saucer. I took a photocopy of the painting, sent it to Pablo by post, and asked, “What is this, and what is this,” and he gave me a description. From then on, we started collaborating, and he painted more ayahuasca visions, accompanied by descriptions. I asked him different things and he would make paintings to illustrate the ideas. I got him the best possible paper and art materials. And again, in some of those paintings you see illustrations of Viveiros de Castro’s ideas. He wrote, “For us these are animals, but to them they are people.” This is what Viveiros de Castro called perspectivism. A good example is a depiction of the *yakuruna,* the water people, and the various animals in their world. They are people.

Amaringo also continued painting landscapes, but by then what I was most interested in was his visionary art. He was illustrating ideas from mestizo shamanism that I knew through my work, like the magical phlegm, sending a dart to cause illness, meeting spirits, and sending away the energy when the ceremony is over. Pablo conceived the visions as some kind of electromagnetic phenomena that you are able to send away when the session is over. He made illustrations of his trips to other realms, depicted alien cities, and so on. This, for me, was extraordinary, to see that all this was in the head of an ordinary person, a poor mestizo. The most interesting part was that when I made copies of his paintings and showed them around, everybody in the Peruvian Amazon would say, “Yeah, yeah, this is ayahuasca!” Everybody who had taken ayahuasca recognized it. Friends of mine, anthropologists, went into the field to the Amazon and showed the visions to the Indians and they said, “Ah, yes, yes this is ayahuasca!”

Pablo became an ayahuasquero because he was cured in a vision by an American doctor. In one of his paintings he depicted the Sachamama, the great mother serpent of the forest, and the Yakumama, which is the serpent

of the water. The Yakumama may take the shape of a boat and the boat comes along with all these spirits. These ideas are found among indigenous tribes, such as the Witoto, as well in the mestizo vegetalista tradition. But then Pablo also included the Wairamama, the great snake mother of the air, of which I was not aware. Suddenly I realized that in this tradition the Wairamama can transform into these kind of UFO-like objects, but Pablo always said these are not machines, these are spirits. They come from other places, they take this shape, but they are really spirits.

Campana Ayahuasca *(1989), by Pablo Amaringo. The website, trueamaringos.com contains this and other works by Amaringo.*

I was astonished by all this iconography, always with the little flying saucers here or there, and these extraordinary cities, and he said, “Yes, that’s what I did when I took ayahuasca.” He went to these cities, and there are these wise people, you meet them, you learn from them, and so on. Quite extraordinary, and many of these ideas you find in Iquitos, and in Pucallpa among the mestizo, for instance the idea of the *tingunas,* some

kind of patterns, entities, that may attack and cover you. But he had many other ideas, such as how he depicted music in his art. Music is always present in the ayahuasca sessions. Indigenous people say that it's impossible to take yajé or ayahuasca without music. I mean, you have to sing.

There are also syncretic elements in his paintings, so you see angels. This particular painting serves me for two purposes. One of them, you see syncretism, with the representation of angels, but then you have the person who takes ayahuasca and sits on a throne and is given a crown and is honored by the angels. For me, this is the perfect example of the ego trip that you can have with ayahuasca. You may say to yourself, "Oh I'm special. I'm a shaman. I'm this and that." That is, for me, the greatest danger with ayahuasca. In another painting Pablo expresses the idea that with ayahuasca our brain would gradually change, we would grow new organs, and this is part of the evolution. It's very interesting, this whole iconography and whole cosmography, but the thing is that I never met other people, except to a certain extent his brother Fortunato, who completely shared this kind of world. How is it possible that you can create such a coherent cosmology alone?

So, we put together this book, *Ayahuasca Visions: Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman,* that some colleagues, Dennis and other people, say is perhaps crucial in the beginning of the globalization of ayahuasca, because it had such an impact, but not only because of the visions, I think, but also because it came with a package, with the idea of the necessity of the diet, the concept of plant teachers, and so on. I think that when ayahuasca finally erupted in the West, it was already associated with the idea of plant teachers, the necessity of the diet, the *icaros* or sacred songs, and so on.

The Spirits or the Mothers of the Plants, *by Pablo Amaringo.*

Now, I'm going to tell you about the Brazilian phenomenon, the religious organization that adopted ayahuasca as a sacrament. There was a big migration during and after the Second World War, from the northeast of Brazil, and lots of the black population went into the Amazon, especially Rio Blanco and then Porto Velho. Here we have the beginning of these three traditions: Santo Daime, Barquinha, and União do Vegetal.

The followers of Raimundo Irineu Serra and of Daniel Pereira de Matos, the founder of Barquinha, call the sacrament Santo Daime. It is said that when Raimundo Irineu Serra took the brew for the first time, he saw an entity that was the Queen of the Forest, but at the same time Virgin Mary. When he died he himself became an entity, so the Daimistas get in touch with him, and the same thing with José Gabriel de Costa, who is like an intermediary and the visions are, somehow, mediated by this being.

I concentrated my work on Barquinha, the second group, which had never been studied before and is heavily influenced by Afro-Brazilian traditions. They sing special *pontos,* or songs, and then incorporate spirits. There are four different kinds of spirits: *pretos velhos,* which are the spirit of black slaves; the *encantados,* princes and princesses from the forest; the *eres,* or child spirits; and the *caboclos,* the spirit of brave Indians. I video recorded and participated in the rituals. There is this extraordinary syncretism, with Virgin Mary and Catholic saints, but also black slaves and mermaids on the altar. They have these ceremonies in the church from eight to midnight, but after midnight they bring out the drums and then they are really into the Afro-Brazilian dimension, and they drink ayahuasca again, and it is something extraordinary. They also have mediums treating patients. Sometimes you have a couple, and he incorporates a certain spirit, and then his wife counsels with him, or rather with the spirit he incorporates. So, I interviewed them, and they said they are able to have two consciousnesses; they still know they are themselves, but at the same time they feel this other entity and literally even feel the clothing of the entity doing the work.

They play music, and the music determines what kind of entity will come to them, but there isn't only one kind of ceremony, there are many different ceremonies. Once I followed them into the forest when harvesting the plants. I learned something on this trip. When harvesting the *Banisteriopsis,* the vine can grow twenty or thirty meters up, and to collect the plant is very dangerous because it is necessary to climb up. One of the members of the church told me that a person went up, but then he got scared and was not able to go down, and the only way to descend was to incorporate a particular entity, and then the entity brought him down. So, I think that this shows that this kind of ability, this incorporation, may have an evolutionary advantage.

Now I'm going to tell you something about my own experiences. I have taken ayahuasca probably over one thousand times, going through many different periods, and it was very scary in the beginning. Now I'm trying to see it in the most objective way possible. For instance, one of the things that I do is I ask myself, If I move my head, does everything move with me or not? And sometimes it does, and it's just like you have a projection, but very often you are *in* a three-dimensional space and you are completely there, and it has up and down, and it remains. So, I ask, How is this space in

front of me? How sharp and stable is what I see? What is the stuff of the vision? I can see sometimes that it can be electromagnetic of some sort, sometimes it looks like plastic, sometimes I have seen the visions can be folded, so that sometimes I see layers and then I realize that these layers are past visions, so an archaeologist of the mind could go down and see and dig out the visions I previously had.

I asked myself during a session, Is what I see static, or can I go to places? Sometimes I can go to places. I can decide to go there or there. Can I zoom in or not? Sometimes I'm able to zoom, and then I go into another space and zoom again and again and again; it's like a fractal, forever. But sometimes it's as if the trip was completely preprogrammed, and that's what makes me very curious. How is it possible? It's just like I go there, and they show me this; then I would like to go somewhere else, but it's impossible, it is just as if I am taken, as if I was being given some sort of lesson, some sort of narrative. I may open my eyes for a while and close my eyes again, and it's just like a reset button, and then another narrative is gradually being developed.

Then I ask, Does my position, laying down or sitting, affect the experience? And sometimes very clearly for me it's very different when sitting. When you are laying down, for me at least, very often, the visions are like thick honey coming down, like really falling upon me, and I'm involved in this or that world, depending on what part of it is engulfing me. Something that I have very often been thinking about, that I read somewhere, is that our retina has the capacity to also see inside, that we have the capacity not only of exoptic but also entoptic vision. Very often, especially when the ayahuasca is not very strong, I see organic structures with my eyes closed. I have no doubt these are not visions; these are really organic structures. It is as when there are three cameras when making a film —three different takes. The same thing happens. I see something, then suddenly it changes into that, and then I go back to the first one. There is something physiological there that I would like to investigate. Sometimes it seems that the visions are superimposed on that organic thing that is behind.

Then, from the point of view of the content, very often I go to cities, or *a* city, and I know its geography, I have been to its various places, I recognize that, below, there is some kind of swamp with gray water, there are some kind of fish or reptiles down there, and there are people in that

world interested in what is found in the swamp or lake. I remember I recently saw a mermaid of some sort coming out of the water, but immediately when it came out it became part of the geometric pattern in the vision. I see technology, such as computers, and they are offering me things, and then very often, lately, they are offering me cell phones! I already have a cell phone. I don't need one! So, technology is embedded into the visions, sometimes technology that I can recognize, sometimes very strange technology, like, as it happened, going into some kind of spaceship and seeing these insectoid beings, but not laying down, they were standing up, hibernating. Or being in a spaceship and looking at the Earth down there. Very often I witness interconnected worlds, and I have the feeling that when I go into this world, the spirits, or whatever beings populated this world, want me to stay there. Then I say, "No, no, it's boring. I've already seen this. I would like to go somewhere else." They say, "No, no, stay, we will show you more things." Then suddenly something opens, zoom, and I go to another world, and I am able to move in these interconnected underworlds.

Also, the entities are very curious, sometimes coming to give me something that I don't understand. Very, very often, they are giving me things, or I have to choose between them, and I don't understand what it is. So, I started thinking, *OK, what do they see in me? How do they see me?* I've been trying to get a mirror in that dimension to see myself. Then I see a mirror but the mirror is always in the wrong position, and when I move my position to see my reflection, something covers it. "No, no," they're joking, and I have spent years with this thing, trying to see myself in the mirror, but it has been impossible to do so!

Another thing that happens very often is that I am offered drinks or food. Don Emilio told me, "Never take anything by the mouth in the spirit world. You get stuck there." So, I'm always refusing, but now it is years, *years,* and they are offering me in the most sophisticated ways drinks of all sorts, of all colors, in all sorts of glasses, and then they say "Mmm, yum, drink, drink, DRINK!" and I say, "No, no, thank you very much, I don't drink." Or sometimes they are even offering me a banquet, and I say, "Oh, no, sorry." It happens again and again. On the other hand, in a lot of fairy tales there is the idea that you shouldn't eat anything in the spirit world.

The other thing that happens in my experiences is that I can "see" them, or I can feel them as anthropomorphic: I see the entities are more or less

like me, and I can relate to them. But then when I get out of the experience and I try to remember what *was* that, I do not recall them as anthropomorphic, but like this or that animal, but for me *in the experience,* they were anthropomorphic. So, for me Viveiros de Castro's view begins to make sense, that these things *appear as human* for the communication, but then the visual recollection I have of them could be something completely different.

Very often I see these beings in the periphery, but as soon as I look at them directly, they simply become the pattern I'm seeing, they disappear, so there is no direct contact. Sometimes I experience attacks. They are coming to try to frighten me. Now these days I'm not frightened anymore. So it may come, whatever it is, it may cover me, sometimes completely, or a serpent may come around me or eat me from below and up. I just simply remain calm, completely calm, because I know that after some time, either suddenly, or gradually, this thing will dissolve, and then I can get into much more interesting worlds. But the thing is not to be afraid, just to be completely calm, whatever happens, even if they are trying to terrorize you. Or what I sometimes do is try to communicate, like raise my hand and say, "High five?" and then hands will appear here and there—there is a response. Sometimes I take ayahuasca and when I go into one of these worlds they are already greeting, doing high five with their hands, or whatever, up.

[audience laughter]

So, what is this?

Another motif I have seen for years is ants, and I've begun to ask, What is the significance of these ants? Are they attacking this world, or are they defenders, or are they showing me places? Sometimes they seem to be like the decorations, with threads of ants hanging in this other world, sometimes they are like pets for the spirits, and so on. For one long period, again and again, I was stuck for almost two years, going again and again to what I call the cockroach world. It was very boring, just insect-like creatures with little legs all wiggling about, and that was all I could see, again and again. Once, I think with Michael Winkelman, I took psilocybin and said, "OK let's see if we can break this pattern and I can see something else," and I saw more

or less the same thing, but with different colors! It was very boring, but then I started to try, with my intention, to create something, for something to happen there, and so I started to think of the concept *flower,* and then suddenly, with a lot of effort, first one flower, then some flowers. I could not predict which flower, but they came, or water, or birds, and so on, but only gradually. Then I came to this idea of the active imagination, that it is possible, though not in the very highest part of the experience but when you are coming down, there is a state in which you can do this active imagination and make things appear. Animals are a little bit difficult to make. I remember I was thinking, *I want a cat,* and made a great effort to make a cat. I just saw whiskers here and there, like little caricatures of a cat, and nothing happened, until at some point a cat crossed rapidly my field of vision and disappeared. I'm getting better at this active imagination.

Reading Jeff Kripal, I read this Frederic Myers quote in your book [*The Super Natural*] about the imaginal, as opposite to imaginary. The imaginal is "a superevolved form of the imagination. . . . Transcendental faculties shown in rudiment in ordinary life." And further from Jeff 's book, he wrote about "the possibility that, in very special moments, the human imagination somehow becomes temporarily empowered or 'zapped' and functions not as simply spinner of fantasies (the imaginary) but as a very special organ of cognition *and* translation (the symbolic) that supersedes and is perceiving some entirely different, probably inhuman or superhuman order of reality but shaping that encounter into a virtual reality display in tune with the local culture: in short, a reflecting back and seeing through *at the same time.*" I hope that Jeff is going to talk about this.

[audience laughter]

Among the Tukano, the work of the imagination is very important. For example, when they reach puberty they have to learn the mythology of the tribe, and then in the ceremonies the old shaman sings about the spiritual geography of their mythology, and the kids under the effect of yajè are re-creating it in their minds, *living* this story. A Kashinawa informant told Els Lagrou, a Belgian anthropologist, "You have to remember a myth before you drink the brew. If you concentrate well on the story, the story and its beings will appear to you in vision, and you will understand the meaning

that the story has for your own life and experiences. You will feel the story. You will live it." So, I feel that we have a great possibility if we are able to get into these high states of the imaginal; then ayahuasca is a tool for research, and by reading this anthropological literature I understand that what we see here is what the shamans do, they say that they are able to see the "others" as they perceive themselves, as humans. We are seeing their own perception of these beings as human.

One of the things that I've been doing for the last twenty years is systematically recording the experiences of others taking ayahuasca, and I have a huge database. Larry Norris, a Ph.D. student at the California Institute of Integral Studies, transcribed one thousand such reports and created a database so that he can search themes with software. I asked him about entities. He gave me a lot of examples, but I just wanted to read out one of these experiences:

> I saw different nature spirits, so visibly and vividly in the plants and trees, and that was an interesting experience because when they first showed themselves to me I was frightened at first, because their appearance was so strange. However, being so present with the love that was there, I opened myself up to greet it. At first, I was a little nervous, but I said, "I accept you for what you are, and who you are," and they allowed themselves to be what they were, without having to clothe themselves in something I could see without being frightened, and it was such a beautiful, beautiful communion.

So, I've been thinking about all this and why the idea of transformation is so important. The idea of communion means that, in order to be able to communicate with, for example, an animal, either the animal, or whatever it is, becomes human, and then you communicate as humans, or you become an animal and you communicate as animals. We have to change clothes. Once you understand this idea, suddenly you see this everywhere. It's everywhere in Amerindian iconography, and it completely changes our perspective, our idea of communion, or communication. *Therianthropes* means you are communicating with both the animal world and the human world.

This perspective is very old; we have it everywhere. In fact the very first representations we have of humans are therianthropes. I give here three archaeological examples: one from the Fumane cave, near Verona, Italy, from 37,000 years ago, where there is a painting of a human figure with horns; then the lion-headed figurine found in the Hohlenstein-Stadel cave in Germany from 34,000 years ago; and finally the shaman from the Cave of the Trois-Frères in France from 15,000 years ago. So, you find it in Europe, but you really find it everywhere. The idea of us being the only intelligent beings on this planet is completely ridiculous once you are immersed into this world, because it's all about intelligence everywhere, entities everywhere. So, again and again, when I'm in these worlds, I ask, "Where are you?" The answer is very simple, "Right here." and I ask, "Who are you?" The answer: "We are you!" I think this interplay is very interesting, because it is not, I don't think, that there is another there that is completely independent from me. It is something out there that is dependent on my own perception, my own world, my own cultural way of seeing things. So, what it is *really* out there is completely a mystery, because we don't know what it is, but it communicates somehow with us, anthropomorphically. My own ideas about this are in the new edition of *Ayahuasca Reader*.

But we have the tendency to see beings everywhere—for instance in the clouds. Demetri Efthyvoulou, a friend from Cyprus who died a couple of years ago, took photographs of the jungle foliage reflected on still water, and then turned the photograph 180 degrees to make symmetrical mirror images of them. Suddenly the spirits are there. About the photographs of nature by Demetri, he once told me that, at an exhibition I organized for him in Leticia, in the Colombian Amazon, a group of Witoto Indians came, and the old guy said, "Oh, this is first time white people do something interesting!"

[audience laughter]

To finish, and this is of course a simplification, René Descartes divided everything into *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Then we became materialists, and the only thing important for us is the res extensa, what you can measure. But I am convinced that there is something in between res cogitans and res extensa, something that is out there, it is real, but it's also

us, something that we have no idea about. I call it *res fantastica.* I hope you have some ideas about this, because I've been looking at this for a long time without an answer.

I'll finish with a metaphor of the Kamsá people of the Sibundoy Valley, in Colombia. They say that when we are in the womb of our mothers we are connected to the placenta, the placenta being the universe for the fetus. They say that ayahuasca, yajè, is a new umbilical cord that connects us with the totality.

DISCUSSION OF

On Encounters with Entities in the Ayahuasca Realm: A Phenomenological View

PATRICK VERNON: When you're doing ayahuasca it's different than, I guess, a night-time dream, where it would be clear, as if you are in this room now, but it's not like that?

LUIS LUNA: Well sometimes it is. I forgot to say, that's the thing, it's so difficult to say, because sometimes it can be like comics, like drawing. Sometimes it can be almost photographic. Sometimes fully three-dimensional, or more real than real. I've been speculating why it looks more real than real, and perhaps one of the reasons is that our normal perception is just through the retina and the lens and we can only focus at certain points in time and the rest is like memory. In the visionary state you have the full perfect imprint, all of it is sharp and therefore looks much more real than this, because this ordinary vision is fuzzy compared to that other experience.

ANTON BILTON: Frequently I've had a situation where, within the vision, I've then seen somebody who's within the circle on the other side of the room in the same visionary space, and my feeling is that they are in the same visionary space as me, because they're taking the medicine and they're having a trip and we're traveling together. And often I don't really want to come back from the trip, but I'll open my eyes very slightly, look across the room, and they'll open their eyes. We don't necessarily do more

than that, but then, postevent, we then say, “You know that time when you opened your eyes, you were in my mindspace,” and they would reply, “Crikey, you were in mine too!” We were in the same space, we acknowledged each other, we didn’t commune very much, but we were both there. Do you think we were both there, effectively traveling together?

Luna: Yeah, probably.

Giancarlo Canavesio: Do you agree that smoked or ingested DMT might allow an easier interaction with the beings?

Luna: You know, I have very little experience. I have sometimes smoked DMT, but I have never really done any comparative study. In fact, just thinking of yajè and ayahuasca, there has not been any phenomenological comparative study of yajè and ayahuasca. Nobody has done it. It’s something that needs to be done. And the indigenous population, they recognize many different yajès, many different ayahuascas, that might give a certain color or give more auditory phenomena or so on, so I have the feeling that we are just scratching the surface.

John Chavez: Have you heard of any optical studies, in terms of potential expansion of our visual spectrum, once you’re under the influence of ayahuasca?

Luna: OK, it’s good that you asked that. Benny Shannon already studied that, and it seems that in the visionary state, with our eyes closed, our field of vision is larger than normal with our eyes open.

Chris Bache: Among the multiple levels of reality, when you get the experience of going into a deeper level, and a deeper level, has it been your experience that the deeper levels operate at a higher energetic frequency than the lower levels?

Luna: I cannot say that there is higher energy or something like that. Of course, from time to time, I had experiences that have been completely, completely different from these that I’m describing, which are much more ineffable and much more energetic. I remember once that I was reading a lot about the big bang and the origin of the universe and all that, and I had

one of those attacks, very powerful, and I was just hanging in there, not panicking, and then, finally, the attack was over and so I relaxed. I went out outside to a place with a little light, and I sat on a table, closed my eyes, and bang! There were three beings of light, and one of them was pointing toward some filigree globes of light, like containing galaxies or something like that, several, and then he pointed out one spot and the voice said, "And there is your universe, just that little one there."

Angela Voss: I wonder if you could say something about the meaning of these visions? The meaning they hold for you in terms of any kind of journey you feel you might have been on, or any kind of teaching they might have held for you?

Luna: OK, I said I have taken ayahuasca now for many years. I have been going through a lot of the personal material, parents, and all this. So, in a way, I had a luxury from time to time of just examining things without getting very emotionally involved. Just trying to be a scientist within these realms. But of course, in my experiences, so many times it has had deep, deep meaning. I remember once I had the vision of my father, but it was not like my father, this father was just a light, but *the presence* was so absolutely of him, he was there—and we'd had some issues—and then everything was completely solved, I understood him, he understood me, everything was perfect. I've had that kind of experience.

David Luke: In what way were the cosmologies of the tribes or mestizos similar and different in terms of how they view these other beings?

Luna: Well, I was explaining that my friends took these visions of Amaringo to the tribes and they said "Ah, yeah this is ayahuasca," but it doesn't mean that those were exactly the same. Every tribe has their own cosmology, and they travel within their cosmology. We have difficulties in the West to find terms to describe the experience because we don't have a common cosmology, each of us depends on our life, the books we have read, different influences and perspectives. So, it's very difficult for us to make some kind of experiment and say, "OK, let's go to that place," because each of us has our different worlds. So absolutely, I think that culture is in there, and the experience is always mediated through culture somehow.

Luke: Is there a sense in which they all regard, for instance, lycanthropy, the shape-shifting, as a genuine thing? That they communicate with them as invisible others where the details may be different, but there's an underlying commonality in the themes?

Luna: The transformation is very important, and "persons"—as everything is a person with the possibility of transforming, any animal can become another animal, or a human, a shaman—so that's the relevance of this quote from Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, that what we do when we take ayahuasca, according to many of these shamans, is that we go back to the mythical time. We go to that space where this transformation was possible, when anything could become something else. It is like a trip to the mythical time.

Ralph Metzner: To what extent did you see explicit mention—by the people that you were relating with—of talking to deceased ancestors?

Luna: I have many examples. That would be one of the themes that you find. In fact, you could say that the best translation of ayahuasca, more than as "the vine of the dead," would be "the vine of the ancestors."

Metzner: Yes, dead ancestors particularly, talking to the ancestors who are dead. See that, to me, is the biggest difference to the Western worldview. In the Western worldview, you can't talk to the dead, they're dead, but indigenous people, they talk to them all the time, *all the time,* in their dreams and visions.

Bilton: Yogananda refers to the causal realm, where we humans have, through many incarnations and working through our karmic clearance, entered a realm where we can become whatever we want at any time, and we are not material anymore, we can take on any form, and therefore we work through every desire, everything we ever wanted to be. It's a higher form of existence. Sometimes in that realm where you meet those entities, I certainly feel that they are operating at will. They can become whatever they want, whether it's what you need or whether it's what they want to show you. That was one thing I picked up. The other one was that you touched upon the man who climbed high up the tree and then got frightened, and then you said he chose to become incorporated by a spirit

and you saw that as a possibility of evolutionary advancement, and I found that very interesting. Could you just expand on that bit?

LUNA: The aim of shamanism, to a certain extent, is to get properties from other organisms into you, or to project those properties. For instance, I was recording a song by a shaman who was helping a woman who was having difficulty during labor, trying to give birth. The shaman was invoking slippery fish, slippery plants, all things that are slippery, so that these things will go into the woman and will facilitate this kind of transference of properties. I see that characteristic very, very clearly in shamanism. Why do you transform yourself into a bird? Because you want to see, you want to fly. They are traveling within species, or bringing properties from other species into us, for our use.

CARINA COOPER: Have you found from drinking different types of ayahuasca, whether it's made in Peru or Brazil, that there is a certain brew that's become more favorable for you in terms of what you might be seeing visually, rather than being in the body more?

LUNA: No. I mean, in general I prefer Brazilian ayahuasca simply because in other countries they may be lazy when they prepare the ayahuasca. In Brazil they are very careful about scraping the bark and cleansing it so that it doesn't produce so much vomiting. But in terms of visions, I cannot be sure. I mean, I prefer the Brazilian because it's less horrible I would say.

VERNON: You've done it so many times now, have there been times when you know there's nothing wrong with the brew, there's a high dose of DMT in it, or whatever, and it's had no effect on you, that you've had no visions?

LUNA: I'm very sensitive apparently. There's something that happens with ayahuasca in that you get reverse tolerance. The more you drink, the less you need. I have seen shamans who just smell it, it's enough for them to be able to sing. So no, it has not happened to me that I don't feel anything, and I'm also very visual, but I'm normally very visual. Every time I go to sleep, in the hypnogogic state, in the mercurial river, I see these entities every night. It's normal, and it's like, "OK, here they are!"

VERNON: But you must have come across other people for which this happens. I guess I want to know why that is, if there's a scientific reason, from neuroscience, or something else?

LUNA: Yes, I have encountered people who have this, and no, we don't know. It would be interesting to study that. But yes, certainly, there are people who do not see visions at all, but they have insights, and that is enough. In a way, I think that we Westerners are very much looking for the visions. Whereas with the Indians it's not so much the visions. In fact, when Steven White and I were creating *The Ayahuasca Reader* we were trying to obtain mythology about the chacruna, *Psychotria viridis,* or mythology about *Diplopterys chaliponga,* but we didn't find it. All the mythology was about the vine. So that is the main component, and apparently, probably the oldest. In fact, some tribes just use caapi, just consume the vine on its own, and it doesn't give you the vision. It puts you in a very interesting state of consciousness, perfect for problem solving, for instance, and they use it for that, they drink it a lot, vomit a lot, but then you have this clarity to try to solve the problems of the community.

DENNIS MCKENNA: How are the entity encounters when only the vine is used? There's no visionary component, so how does that manifest?

LUNA: I don't know.

DANIEL PINCHBECK: And what about anything truly telepathic, or foreshadowing, like seeing a scene that appears later that actually happens?

LUNA: Well, not to me, but I have had people who report that kind of thing. From the very beginning in fact. One hardcore scientist from Barcelona, who didn't take ayahuasca for years and years, told me about one time in which he took it and then he saw his grandfather, lying dead, and he saw the room and everything, and then that happened several years later. He saw him in the room, and remembered, "My goodness, I have seen all of this, exactly like that." And he is a hardcore scientist.

BACHE: In the first meeting here, in 2015, Rupert Sheldrake was here and speaking about morphogenetic fields, so my question is, do you think that the experience that people have had historically with ayahuasca literally

creates a kind of energetic field that influences people's subsequent experiences?

Luna: We have been discussing this with Rupert. I have observed many groups on ayahuasca, and they say that they all get into some kind of field of awareness together . . .

Bache: So, the morphogenic field . . . is their therapeutic work sort of changed over time?

Luna: Yes.

Canavesio: What do you think about when people say the medicine doesn't give you what you want, but gives you what you need? I had this idea that if you haven't done your homework, your integration and application of past information, then the medicine just doesn't give it to you. What do you think about that?

Luna: Yes, yes, absolutely, I would say that.

Vernon: What's your stance then on synthetic drugs?

Luna: That's one of the big questions. Is the spirit in the plant, or is the spirit in the molecule? Myself, but it's just simply preference, I like to take the plant. But I can imagine, I mean, people do report extraordinary experiences with the pure alkaloids, so how can I say that this is better? Simply for me, I like to take the plants.

Chavez: Do you experience, or has anybody that you know experienced, being sober in an ayahuasca setting and having some overlap in their visions? Because I've heard of that.

Luna: Well my wife, very often she doesn't take it, but she is just feeling the whole thing. I remember once that somebody was having difficulty, and so I was helping and I thought, Oh, I need my rattle. And I just opened my eyes, and Adriana was just giving me the rattle. Somehow, she just felt it, and says, "Here it is." The contact high, that's a fact. Sometimes there are people who do not take the brew and still completely feel it.

LUKE: Have you ever had encounters with entities that gave you the impression of their objective existence?

LUNA: With the Barquinha I had my first strange encounter with some beings. I had been studying theology, and I had a revulsion against all that, and suddenly I found myself again with Jesus and Mary in my visions, the whole thing, all the images. And I said, "Well, I have to do fieldwork, so this part of it." And I remember suddenly, I had my video camera, I started to feel sparks of energy in my video camera I had at my side, and there were these alien beings touching the camera making these sparks, and for me this was real! I mean the machine was making some sounds and movement. It was more like an alien thing, yet within the context of Barquinha they have nothing to do with these kinds of beings. I also remember when I was with the Shipibo, very often I was going into the underworld, seeing reptiles, frogs, toads, these kinds of things, and I remembered Don Basilio, my teacher, just looking at me and laughing, and he said, "I saw what you were seeing, but you didn't ask for help!" I was too proud to ask for help.

VIMAL DARPAN: In your view, the exposition as you explained it, with these sorts of preprogrammed visions, they involved cities and technologies and various other sundry effects, which I totally relate to. Do you think these have any intrinsic meaning, or do you think they are just a side effect of the medicine? Because, as you see in the Santo Daime visions, they do it in bright light, they don't encourage the visions, they more encourage the community in the congregation, so I'm just wondering what you think about, when in the jungle it's done in the dark and the emphasis is more upon the inner vision, or when it's done with the Santo Daime where there's not much emphasis placed on what they call the *miração.* Do you have any comments on that?

LUNA: Well, you know, many of the indigenous tribes, they believe the spirits live in cities, so the idea of the city, of towns of some sort, you find it among the indigenous. And it's very interesting that I'm a Westerner and I also see cities, so there is something there. Now of course, their cities typically will have hammocks and canoes and other things, and I see more boats and buses and cars, but the idea is there. Among the Santo Daime,

they put the emphasis in the light, and in all the churches in fact. It's different.

CHAPTER 2

Visionary Experiences, Entities, and Alien Worlds

A Natural Evolved Psychology

Michael Winkelman

I probably should start off by saying I'm going to be the black sheep here I'm afraid. I'm certainly not agnostic or atheistic about psychedelic entities or others, I'm not even a skeptic in the technical sense of the term but I am a doubting Thomas. And I think it's not just because I haven't had any of these very compelling experiences, it's not, as David might allege that I "haven't picked up the pipe." I've still been left with the sense that whatever we encounter in these experiences is not something real (i.e., noumena); in some sense that's a transcendental reality beyond our own perceptual capacities, beyond our own expectations. I think that it's important that we study these experiences, but I don't think that they're real in a transcendental sense.

We can't trust the evidence of our senses; they don't necessarily function in ways that represent what's really out there. On the other hand, I think that it's foolish to discount these experiences, I think that these experiences are very important information about how the brain functions, about how our mind functions, about the relationship between these exogenous neural transmitters and our own endogenous neural transmission

system. So, my perspective here is one that says we need to take these experiences seriously and, as Gallimore and Luke pointed out, we need a proper academic study of these experiences. I'm going to make some basic proposals about that today. But I'm going to suggest, furthermore, we can't just study psychedelic entities, we have to study all kinds of entities.

The mystical traditions are replete with entities that not only show up on the path of development, in meditative experiences, but you may encounter these entities on the road and they have these long conversations with you and, *zap,* they're gone. So, my approach today is going to be one that tries to place all of these entity experiences in a broader context that leads us to questions about why there might be fundamentally similar entity experiences across a wide range of agents and processes for altering consciousness. I'm going to be a little reductionistic in my approach and really try to attribute much of what's experienced, in the entity experiences, to some of the fundamental operators in the brain, innate operators, innate modules, or what others have called innate intelligences.

If you show two dots with a line underneath to a child, an infant, a newborn within the first few days of life, they spend almost all of their time looking at this image as opposed to an image of the same elements not arranged as a very basic face, as the other image doesn't hold much interest for them. Equally, this facelike image, they will stare a long time at it. It doesn't take a whole lot to produce something that leads us to perceive that there may be some kind of entity there that we have to pay attention to. So, what this leads me to conclude as an initial premise is that we have to understand how it is that our brain operates and how it predisposes us to experience the world in certain kinds of ways that make the interpretation of exogenous, external entities almost inevitable.

I think that the first thing that we have to do here is address the question, is there *a* psychedelic entity? Do psychedelic entity experiences share a particular profile that all of them in common have that gives us a phenomenon to study? Thus far, it looks as if people who have examined this question have very diverse ideas about what these psychedelic entities are. Psychologist Benny Shanon, based upon over one hundred different ayahuasca experiences and examining other people's accounts, concluded that some were represented as mythological beings, others as divinities, semidivinities, still others as animal-human hybrids—in some cases

animals, but remarkably often it's the animalhuman combination that stands out—even extraterrestrials, angels, demons, and other entities.

These are well exhibited in Pablo Amaringo's paintings. Sometimes these entities look like various forms of recognizable mythological beings or even historical personages. Other times they have no particular referent, although people will say, "Oh that means it's this particular god." There are certainly lots of different images that represent deities, or semideities, that are working on behalf of humans, in very different forms but interestingly they all seem to, pretty much, look like human beings. Even when animal elements are introduced into the images, the animal elements frequently take on a humanlike personage as humanoid forms. There are a few exceptions with things like mermaids but even the snakes seem to come up with human heads quite often.

Representations that are interpreted as being extraterrestrials also are very humanoid in form and indeed most extraterrestrials seem to be that way, and from antiquity, angels have always appeared to be some kind of special human beings, even the demons take on a very humanlike form. This might immediately lead us to conclude that these are basically humanoid entities, but Rick Strassman interviewed his participants in his DMT studies about the entities they experienced, and they experienced insects and bees and cacti and clowns, and all kinds of sentient entities—manatees, reptiles, spiders, stick figures. The field is widening.

[audience laughter]

And then David summarizes a lot of other studies, people's reports of DMT entities, and, I don't know if they were all from Ireland or something, but especially gnomes and dwarves and fairies, elves, imps, goblins, or little people. So, we have quite a diverse body of data that says there's not a single kind of psychedelic entity experience, and if that wasn't complicated enough, a number of people, notably Graham Hancock, have pointed out that psychedelic entities really don't seem to be that different from many other kinds of entity experiences. Hancock pointed out their similarity to elves, to extraterrestrials, there're similarities to a variety of shamanic phenomena. Other people have drawn parallels between DMT entities and angels, for instance, and even ghost experiences. And if I was to read from

the paper I'd go on to talk about a variety of OBEs [out-of-body experience] and a variety of different kinds of psychiatric phenomena in which people have experienced entities that appear, in some ways, to parallel some of the ways in which psychedelic entities appear to human beings.

So, we have to keep in mind that what it is we perceive is not necessarily what's there, that we can perceive things that do not have an objective reality. I'm reminded of what color physiologists tell us, where in optical illusions, the color you see is the one color that's not there in the object. That's how perverse our sensory system is. So how can we begin to get a better understanding of just what these psychedelic entities are? I want to make a very general research proposal for a new field of scientific study, it's *entitiology*. I may be the first to put that word out in print, I couldn't find it in Google.

[audience laughter]

We need a cross-cultural and interdisciplinary study of these entity experiences and what we need to do is to get, as anthropologists say, thick descriptions. We need to have very elaborate accounts of the experiences that people have, create a data set from these kinds of experiences, and use that as a basis to first answer a couple of fundamental questions regarding what similarities may or may not exist across psychedelic entities. For a variety of reasons, we're going to have to create a database that's much broader than just that of psychedelic entities.

Quite simply, if we want to know whether or not psychedelic entities have any unique properties, it's only by comparing them to other types of entities that we can answer that question. In a fundamental sense I think entitiology is going to have to encompass what are already established fields of studies: angelology—I'm not kidding there's angelology out there—demonology, and spiritology are all established fields that talk about the regular properties of different types of angels and demons and spirits. I think we're inevitably drawn into the studies of ETs, UFOlogy, and we ask, "How do these entities appear? What are their properties? How do they behave?"

The phenomena of possession, mediumship, and shamanism also are part of this broad field that we need to engage, as well as people's experiences of ghosts and apparitions and a variety of psychiatric syndromes, including the well-recognized old-hag syndrome, in which people experience some kind of entity sitting on them and literally crushing them to death. In terrorizing dreams and nightmares there's a variety of psychiatric syndromes in which people experience entities coming and attacking them and causing them great harm, and there's even a belief that in some cases this does cause death to some people.

Ultimately, we may have to wander off into folklore and mythology studies as well, it may be that many of these psychedelic entities people encounter are things that have been described for hundreds or thousands of years. So, what is it we are going to have to assess? We are going to have to have a wide range of descriptive variables that are, in essence, derived from what we perceive to be the key features of these accounts. To my thinking we have to start off with gross features of appearance: shape, color, are they humanoid or not humanoid? What kind of animal forms appear? What are the behaviors that they engage in? What do they do? What does the percipient infer about their intentions? What are the forms of communication, is it telepathic, is it verbal, is it hand signals? How does the message get across and what's the message? What's the content perceived by the person?

We also need to ask questions about the emotions expressed by the entities as well as the emotions experienced by the percipient. What were you doing? What did you try to say? What did you try to communicate to this entity? And then various forms of perception regarding the agency: Is it mechanical? Is it organic? And then we have to move on to the questions of the percipient: What kind of alterations of consciousness did they do before they had this experience? What kind of drug? What doses? What kind of nondrug alteration of consciousness technology may have been employed, be it chanting, singing, or fasting? There's an immense literature within the Catholic tradition on visionary experiences under fasting. Demons and angels and all kinds of entities appear to people who fast for long periods of time, as well as people who go on solo ocean voyages. Entities appear to them too and help them on their way. And, ultimately, I think we need to get some sense of contextual features. What does it look like when you have the entity, not just the entity but what's around it?

I'm going to propose here that our analyses also need to examine the notion of these phenomena corresponding to the innate modular structures of the brain. Can we identify, within these accounts, features that seem to correspond directly to specific ways in which our brain functions? Now you might say, "What good is that going to do?" I'm going to give you a brief example from a recent project that I started almost forty years ago, it was my doctoral dissertation, and it was asking a similar question, Are shamans real?

Do shamans really exist or is this just a figment of the Western imagination, something invented by an anthropologist who took too much peyote, or is there really a phenomena there to be understood? My approach, in a similar way to what I proposed about psychedelic entities, was one in which I didn't just look at shamans, I looked at everything that was considered to be a magical or religious practitioner in a cross-cultural sample. I read more than one hundred ethnographies, I created a whole list, basically a checklist of features, that applied to *all* kinds of religious practitioners. I went back, I coded the data for each kind of religious practitioner, and every society in the sample ended up with 115 different kinds of practitioners. Then I did cluster analysis and ended up with groups that were empirically derived from the empirical features of the data, and then I could go back and determine which features were shared by each of these groups.

And, as I was hoping, one of the groups had almost all of the classical features that Eliade had attributed to shamans. So it was real, it was a transcultural phenomenon, it was a transcendental reality, not just something we were imagining. And this ultimately led me down the path of evolutionary psychology and the kinds of ideas that I'm going to present to you today because, when we have universals, it's very difficult to attribute it to culture or individual features. We have to look to human biology for an explanation.

So, if we do this kind of study, I have some very specific hypotheses here that I think you will have already seen, such as that there are different types of psychedelic entity experiences, not a single one. The different types of psychedelic entity experiences are going to resemble other kinds of entity experiences. There's not going to be just features that are only about psychedelic entity experiences, except for perhaps some that are produced

by specific effects of psychedelics, and I'm wanting to propose that if we do this kind of study we need to take our reportees and do some kind of assessment of their own psychological qualities. I expect that people who have these types of experiences are going to score much higher on measures of hypnotic susceptibility, dissociation, et cetera.

Now what kind of benefit might we get from doing this type of study? Well I think the nineteenth-century census of hallucinations carried out by the Society for Psychical Research, in the UK, gives us an interesting parallel here. In a book that was ultimately published as *A Census of Hallucinations,* they reported on the results of the study in which they asked people, "Have you ever, when completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living being or inanimate object or of hearing a voice or impressions that, insofar as you can discover, was not due to any external physical cause?" They got hundreds of accounts that they subjected to analyses and they came up with a very interesting profile. There was a preponderance of cases where people reported this kind of "hallucination" that occurred shortly after they came out of sleep or dreams; it was about a family member that they perceived was either seriously injured, dead, or dying; and they subsequently verified in the following days or weeks that that death had in fact occurred.

So welcome to the world of entities, we have some notion about what kind of circumstances provoke what particular kind of entity experience. Now of course this kind of study is not going to *prove* the existence of psychedelic entities, but I think it's going to provide us with a variety of hypotheses. And I'm going to take an aside on this argument perhaps to say we do need to do other kinds of things to assess psychedelic entities, and I think the basic question we need to incorporate into our experimental designs is, Do psychedelic entities manifest humanlike qualities? Are they capable of exhibiting higher-order cognitive processes? That they're not just merely automatons rolling around in circles, it's not just the circus wheel going in circles, but that they can do something that proves to us that they have this capability for engaging in interaction with us.

They ought to be able to do things at least as complex as what we can train an animal to do to qualify as an entity. Maybe not what you can train a cat to do, but at least a dog.

[audience laughs]

This learning ought to model for us what we should get from an entity if we really want to consider them to be autonomous entities. Again, the Society for Psychical Research study of mediumistic communication with the deceased provides some very good methodological models. Interestingly they ultimately came to the conclusion that these kinds of communicative interactions did not provide evidence for autonomous entities. There were certainly complicating issues; as David Luke has pointed out, we need to ultimately be concerned about the psi hypothesis and whether clairvoyance, or extrasensory perception of some form, account for these positive outcomes. But at this point we don't even have enough evidence to be concerned about that.

I expect that if we do these types of studies, we are going to find that psychedelic entities are not capable of ordinary human cognitive and social activities. They're not going to be able to cooperate in experiments. If we ask your entity to show up in my DMT experience and communicate something from your entity to my entity to me, I'm hypothesizing it's not going to happen, we're not going to be able to get the entities to collaborate. Now your cat doesn't collaborate, OK, but your dog does, we can train dogs to do things; if we don't have something as complex as a dog, I'm not sure that we really have an autonomous entity phenomenon to be concerned about. Of course, those of you that have had these entity experiences are impressed that these are beings that are far beyond our own capabilities. If they are, let them show it; let's have controlled experiments that enable us to see them engage in these controlled interactions and provide proof, from one person to another, of some kind of communicative process.

I don't think it's going to happen. Why? Because of the cognitive effects of psychedelics, we are not going to be able to produce these kinds of experiences. I want to propose that these kinds of higher-level cognitive processes are not going to be present in psychedelic entity encounters because there are certain neurological processes that are compromised by psychedelics. Dittrich proposed a couple of decades ago that a general feature of alterations of consciousness was a compromise of the prefrontal cortex and all of its higher-level capabilities for planning and future thought and integration of diverse kinds of information. We've seen a similarly

confirming paradigm come out of the research of Robin Carhart-Harris and colleagues that points out that psychedelics disable the default mode network and this involves a loss of the top-down control of experience. Under psychedelics we are no longer able to use these higher cognitive functions, and it leads to a release of these lower brain processes. This is what I'm going to propose here regarding how we can understand the major features of the entity experiences as a function of the release of innate brain processes that occur as a consequence of the debilitation of the prefrontal cortex and the default mode network.

This takes us into the areas of evolutionary psychology, the notion that there are a variety of innate modules, innate intelligences, or innate operators, terms used relatively synonymously. These are evolved capacities that are automatic hardwired responses within our brain that are designed to deal with very specific kinds of information. Like the way babies are hardwired to respond to very simple configurations that very basically resemble eyes and mouth, we're hardwired to respond to those kinds of configurations because they have significance for us. Why? Because they're part of the adaptations for millions of years of a foraging lifestyle, adaptations for living and relating to animals, including the most dangerous and important animals around, other human beings.

So, we have a kind of brain system that some have compared to a Swiss Army knife, we have all of these innate capacities that, when triggered by the appropriate stimuli, unfold normally either in a response process or in a learning process. One of the innate capacities is language. You don't have to teach language to a child; just expose a child to language and they learn the language and they become a competent producer of the language. Expose them to three languages, they learn three languages, and become competent producers of three languages. The brain is predisposed to engage in certain kinds of responses.

One of the most important of these innate adaptations is what has been called a hyperactive or hypersensitive agent detection device, which is basically the processing capacities that produce universal beliefs in animism, embodying unseen agents.

There is something out there that we have to pay attention to, there are agents, entities, or beings that we need to understand. This involves specialized adaptations related to both predator detection and prey

detection, an unseen entity. If you weren't supersensitive to the possibility of a tiger in the bush, you were lunch! If you were hypersensitive to the possibility to a tiger in the bush, you might be a little on edge once in a while, but you are much less likely to get eaten and therefore more likely to pass on your genes. This selected for a tendency, not only in humans but in other animals as well, to attribute the action of an intentional agent as a fundamental cause of what we perceive out in reality. And in the course of human evolution, this agency detection device was increasingly honed to detect other human beings, not only because we depended on other human beings for survival, but also because for the last million years the most dangerous enemy to human beings, besides parasites, is another human being.

So that's why the newborn baby spends a lot of time looking at the symmetrical pattern most like a face and doesn't think the other pattern is very important. Consequently, if nature images are reflected through 180 degrees to produce a symmetrical image, most of you will perceive some kind of entity in there. It doesn't take a whole lot to activate our agent detection tendencies within the human brain, and this is just the beginning of our hardwired programming.

Another adaptation for social life was what has been called an *intra*-personal intelligence, which is a metacognitive self-awareness in which we don't just behave, but we're aware of our own capacities, we're aware of how our desires or motivations may affect behavior, and consequently we can reflect upon options rather than just behaving. But in essence we become very aware of our own self qualities and we inevitably project our own self qualities onto *everything*—including nature, which is the fundamentals of animism.

There's something out there that's like me, that thinks, looks, wants, acts, behaves like we do. Humans have this tendency to attribute to anything, especially unseen actors or movers of phenomena, the notion that there is a causal agent out there that is basically like us. Why? Evolutionary psychologists say, because human survival depends upon us being aware of other human beings and being able to perceive them in a way that we can understand. The basic way that we understand other human beings is to say that they must be basically like what's going on in our own head and body. So, we project our own psychosocial dynamics onto the material world.

Another innate module is called the *inter*personal intelligence, which is a set of capacities for inferring the mental states of others. It's been called a theory of mind. It combines several modular capacities for detecting social others and distinguishing in group versus out group, it's either us or it's not us, and it's very important to know. These things that we perceive that are humanlike, we begin to look into their minds, to figure out what it is that they're thinking about us. This is the fundamental aspect of developing a social human being: we introject what we perceive about others for our own qualities, our own orientations. If somebody in the group looks like they're scared of something all of a sudden, bingo! I better be scared about something all of a sudden.

So, in essence, the fundamentals of human development and socialization involve the capacity to infer that others are like ourselves. This function involves mirror neurons, neural structures that are activated both when *we* engage in a goal-oriented behavior, as well as when we perceive another human being engaging in that same goal-oriented behavior. The brain fires with the same neuronal circuitry, seeing the behavior as it does when one does the behavior.

So, my general hypothesis is that these entity experiences are going to be shown to reflect the activation of innate modules of the brain. We have an extreme sensitivity to infer an agent, or entity if you prefer. We automatically assume things out there are something like ourselves, therefore these entities are going to have humanlike properties. We have evolved a need to understand human others in our groups, so we have a tendency to infer the thoughts of whatever it is that we encounter.

What I'm proposing here is basically a kind of psychedelic neuro-phenomenology, the idea that the phenomenology of psychedelic experiences is a consequence of certain kinds of neurological effects that result from the way in which psychedelics interact with our brain. Psychedelics are agents that activate various innate modules.

This is not a new hypothesis. It's actually been around for almost a century. Research by Klüver in the 1920s on people taking mescaline and what they experienced led to his proposal of entoptic phenomenon. A variety of internal perceptual forms are stimulated by the presence of psychedelics in the human system. Under mescaline, his subjects drew very similar kinds of diagrams of the images that they experienced. They

included basic geometric forms—combinations of lines, patterns, and wavy lines, a variety of circles, and then increasingly complex combinations of these. So, a lot of different kinds of designs, diagrams, were done by people, but the interesting thing was that just about everybody gave the same repertoire of elements that they perceived. Why? Because of the way in which the psychedelics interacted with the visual cortex and stimulated some of the innate aspects of the visual system. Today we know there are many of these, such as motion detectors that are probably responsible for a variety of flow experiences that occur under psychedelics. So when you add these innate capacities together you get a variety of complex experiences that are basically psychedelic neuro-phenomenology, a result of how psychedelics interact with our brain to stimulate innate capacities.

So, what are these innate intelligences? Howard Gardener proposed ten intelligences including intrapersonal (self-awareness); interpersonal awareness of others; linguistic intelligence; and a logical mathematical reasoning intelligence, manifested for instance as people who can't tie their own shoes or feed themselves, but they can give an answer to a complex mathematical equation in about 1.2 seconds. Also, bodily kinesthetic intelligence, an ability to interpret what the meaning of behavior is, and to use it, for instance, in dance and drama, to communicate meetings. A musical intelligence; there are three- and four-year-olds that can play piano better than you or I can probably ever learn to play. How did they learn? They just sat down and started playing and quickly became a maestro! It's an innate capacity for some. Also, a spatial intelligence, for creating things in space and putting things together and creating objects out of raw materials, like weaving.

Those were the initial ones that Gardener proposed. In his update in the year 2000 he proposed three additional innate intelligences. A naturalist intelligence, which is basically an animal intelligence. We have an innate capacity to not only perceive animals and animal species but to recognize differences among animals and their functional attributes just by looking at them. Young children who have never seen these animals, and just been shown pictures, can make all kinds of inferences. Even more surprisingly they will make the same kind of organization or grouping of animal species that Linnaeus proposed for classifying the natural world. The Linnaean system reflects what is already pre-existing in a structure regarding our perception of the natural world.

Gardener proposed a spiritual intelligence too, although he was really kind of wishy-washy about just what it was. I think we probably have more than one spiritual intelligence; he thought maybe it was related to our existential intelligence or desire to understand something about the farthest reaches of the universe and to provide some kind of explanation of what's out there. This is the source of the world's mythologies, we've got to have a reason for all this, and we don't really have to think too much to make one up. It's almost like we're predisposed to give causal explanations for what's going on in the world based on our internal experiences.

Within the field of cognitive science of religion, the idea that spiritual beliefs and experiences and religious practices are a function of innate modules and innate operators has been accepted for about twenty-five years. We've got these hyperactive agent detection devices; we're always looking for something going on, and we have this device that says there must some humanlike cause behind this. So for instance, if you take geometrical figures and give a computer program instructions to make them randomly bounce around on a screen, and you show it to little children and ask what's going on, they don't say just a bunch of random shapes moving around the screen. They make up stories about what these things are doing, and sometimes such very complex stories, you have to ask, "Wow, where'd you get that?"

We are innately disposed to make up stories about what we experience, and we have a tendency to make up stories that are basically teleo-functional reasoning device manifestations. There's a good reason for how all of these things fit together. D'Aquili and Newberg, who were both neuroscientists and very interested in religion, use the notion of causal operators and a holistic operator, basically the same kinds of ideas as the intentional and the teleo-functional reasoning device.

I've exploited this idea of modular capacities in terms of explaining shamanism. When I discovered that shamanism existed in all of these different foraging societies of the world, the question was, Why? I started looking at the brain, and an archaeologist Stephan Mithen put the pieces out there for me in these innate modules. Mithen presented these human cognitive capacities as evolving through the acquisition of this animal detection system, self-awareness system, mental inference systems, our body systems, and various social and identity modules. What fell into place

for me was that various aspects of shamanism reflect ways in which these modules are either combined together [i.e., animal and self modules], or else dissociated from their normal biological integration [i.e., separate self and body modules].

Modular integration is manifested in animal spirits and self into animal transformation. Take for instance the famous sorcerer image from Trois-Frere cave, dated to 13,000 BCE. Three brothers discovered a cave, and there was this image on the wall that looked something like a human being but it's got deer antlers, it looks like it's got some kind of feet of a beaver, it's got an owl's face, features of the body look a little like an antelope, and some people say there's a lion in the face. With this combination of features, what is this? Animal modules and self modules get integrated together, we now experience the world through the notion that we're like an animal.

There's also the notion of the soul flight, or OBE, that's key to the notions of shamanic work, and philosophers now are discussing the OBE as basically a disintegration of the unity of the visual processing module, our corporeal or somatic module, and our self module. Extensive stimulation of the temporal parietal junction of the brain will produce this. You can do this in a lab! You can even trick people into this dissociation by giving them false feedback about what's happening with their body via cameras and virtual reality headsets.

Another feature of shamanism, the death and rebirth experience, part of shamanic formation, is a disintegration of the self. The selfoperator disintegrates. Psychiatrists were proposing this twenty years ago, before they really caught on to the notion that we have these operators.

So, what are these operators? I've left out a whole lot of them, I'm just going to use a few here that come from Paul MacLean, a neurobiologist who studies reptiles. He discovered that all classes of reptiles have these basic functional behaviors that were homologous in very fundamental ways. Sexual operators: in mammals we have a bonding operator and, as higher-level mammals, we have a falling-in-love operator, which is the shift from the dopaminergic mechanism to the oxytocin mechanism. That's the falling in love, as opposed to being all excited, but it's a neurological shift. Audio-vocal communication operators: mothers singing lullabies, communicating with animals through sounds. Species identity operators: the

ingroup/outgroup operators highly attuned to figuring out, “Is this one of us or one of them?” There is also a play operator; we can understand animals playing quite intuitively.

I think all of the basic universal emotions are innate operator structures, that’s why they manifest in uniform ways around the world. There are also aggression operators, territorial operators, hierarchic operators (they’re big, or more powerful than us), time operators. The loss of sense of time and sense of eternity in some psychedelic experiences makes it clear that some operators are being disabled. Like, has anyone asked you at the peak of a DMT experience, What it is that you’re experiencing? And you’re unable to speak. The language operator is not working. The language operator is at least three modular operators, including a productive operator and a comprehension operator; in some psychedelic experiences it appears that the comprehensive operator is working, we understand something but when it comes down to saying what it is, we’re back to the classic mystical phenomena: “it’s beyond words!” That language operator is not functioning. But the semiotic operator is functioning, interpreting behavior as communication, you infer something from the behavior—how they feel, what they think, what they may do. And there are nursing and maternal care operators often manifested in psychedelic experiences in encounters with elves, featured in this notion that you are there to nurse their infants. So, do their infants really need nursing, or is something happening that stimulates your innate operators?

There are a number of hypotheses here regarding the roles of these innate modules in entity experiences, that the shared properties of psychedelic entities and other entities reflect modular intelligences, specifically social modules. Features distinguishing different types of psychedelic entities and other entities are going to involve interrelated configurations of innate operators—things that go together, like love and nursing, or hierarchy and aggression—and that the unusual characteristics of psychedelic entities involve the integrated operation of modules that are normally functional in a segregated way, they don’t normally operate together.

OK, so you saw the entity, you know it’s there, it does things. Who is it? How come there’s a person there to be perceived, different from you? I’m going to propose this involves humans’ variety of different forms of self.

Selves that not only develop sequentially with biological development, but also a variety of forms of the psychological self, a variety of cognitive forms of self. Our early forms of self are still present. There can be days when you start to act like a little kid, or rebellious teenager, rather than the mature adult that you are, it just takes the right stimuli to evoke that form of self to come out.

There's good neurological research about different forms of self. Antonio Damasio, a psychiatrist who studied people in psychiatric institutions because of brain injury concluded that we had at least three different forms of self. One is a proto self that basically was the physical organism that could walk around and do things, open doors and avoid walls, but couldn't tell you the slightest thing about what they were doing and where they were going. There is a core self with all the features of the proto self, but also with emotions and that experiences visual images that they use to navigate through the world and express things, but without verbal abilities. And finally there is the autobiographical self, our basis for permanent sense of self. I'm going to make a no-brainer hypothesis here. Those of you who know the default mode research are going to say, "That's right, the autobiographical self is not going to be there under psychedelics!" So I propose that psychedelic entities, and perhaps expressed self as well, are going to manifest the features of the proto self and core self under psychedelics.

But this psychedelic self doesn't really seem like us. There are psychiatric articles about an alien-self phenomenon, a psychiatric syndrome in which a person doesn't feel like they are themselves and may actually not have any sense of ownership of their own behavior, their own emotions, even their thoughts. As ideas come and go, they don't know where they come from, and they feel, "Hey it's not me!" It's associated with people who have dysfunction in the prefrontal cortex, another neurological feature of psychedelics and ASC [altered states of consciousness] in general. There's a wide variety of psychiatric syndromes involving depersonalization phenomena where you don't feel like yourself, you feel like your thoughts come from somebody else, you feel like somebody else may be directing your behavior. This is strongly associated with patients with prefrontal lobotomies and also widely manifested in advanced meditative practices, as well as hypnotic phenomena where people do things but they say they are not doing it, that somebody else is doing it.

Intense hypnotic susceptibility is also associated with the loss of prefrontal functions.

These psychiatric syndromes provide an understanding of a variety of ways that phenomena can occur in which we have experiences of other beings, entities, doing things for us, through us, and with us, but that we have no ownership of. We don't have a sense of, "This is me having these experiences making these choices, doing these things." And, of course, the whole area of research of possession phenomena opens the door even wider and provides very good evidence that the idea that somebody else controls our behaviors and tells us what to do—and we may actually watch ourselves do things that somebody else is directing—is not an unusual phenomenon.

My conclusions are that we need a systematic study of entity experiences to find the features of psychedelic entities. I think if we do determine that there are specific features associated with psychedelic entities or that there are a group of different types and subtypes of psychedelic entity experiences, the first thing we have to do is engage in a neurophenomenological examination. Do the features that manifest in these entities reflect something about what we know about how psychedelics affect the brain? I'm just going to throw out a couple here. We have the notion that the prefrontal cortex is disturbed not only by psychedelics but by dreaming, meditation, hypnosis, and a variety of other things that are habitually used to induce alterations of consciousness. We know psychedelics disable the default mode network, but we know a lot more about what's being taken offline than we do about what's coming up. We know that there are organized features of experience, but we have yet to really determine what it is that's getting hooked up. What we do know is that parts of the brain that normally do not communicate with each other are now communicating with each other.

We know that there are a variety of forms of signal disturbance, that the ordinary coherence of the ascending neuron discharge in the brain is disrupted, and people have pointed to the notion of frame stacking, briefly, because the psychedelics are resistant to reuptake. They don't get pulled out of the receptors the same way that serotonin normally does, the receptor keeps firing and firing and firing. I think that this is a reasonable explanation for the features of psychedelic art worldwide, where you get

these repeated edges of frames, because of forgetting that neuron firing again and again and again, until it completely habituates and doesn't function anymore, which then leads to other things, like novel combinations, because things that normally are separated are now allowed to flow together. And systems that are normally repressed are being released. And, why did we get all this creativity, all these new ideas, and all these things we never thought of before? Well it's because we're getting all these things mixed together that are normally kept separate by the top-down control of the brain, by the frontal cortex, by the prefrontal cortex, and by the default mode network.

What I proposed many years ago is the notion that what happens with psychedelics is a form of psychointegration of lower brain processes; that what we're getting is the elicitation of these areas of the brain that are normally repressed by the frontal brain; and that in essence we're getting the release of what normally is kept under control most of the time. The information available to your brain never comes into consciousness. For instance, right now, I can say, "How does your butt feel?" Before I asked you, you probably didn't think about it unless you have a hemorrhoid problem.

[audience laughs]

As soon as I asked you, you can be aware of it. Then I can ask how your foot feels, but before then there was no conscious awareness. Why? Because the frontal cortex says, "How my butt and feet feel are irrelevant, I'm paying attention to Michael talking." So, when you get rid of the control by the frontal cortex, all of this comes pouring out.

My near final conclusion is that evolutionary models provide some testable hypotheses. Show me there's a psychedelic entity and we can collect data via experiences that people have and analyze them for these features. I'm not willing to do it myself, but I'm willing to be an outside member for some graduate student's doctoral dissertation.

[audience laughs]

I've already done the model! I've done the research for shamanism, it's pretty straight forward, it's not brain science, almost!

So, are there really psychedelic entities? Across time, in my experience, I'm the only psychedelic entity that's been able to show the ability to persistently collaborate with researchers and engage with communicative interactions, across time, although I may be now completely unrecognizable, so . . .

[Michael and audience laugh]

I think, you know, much about the features of psychedelic experiences can be understood in terms of these innate modules and now that I've oriented my brain to that, when I start hearing people talk about their psychedelic experiences, it's like bingo! Bingo! Bingo! Here are all these innate modules coming out. When Luis was talking today about various things, I made these connections. Again it's like, "Yes that's how the innate modules function!"

I remember people saying all the time, "These entities had something to say to me, they were just standing around and sort of looking at me, and when I looked at them they looked away and when I tried to watch them they weren't there anymore." To me this is just the innate modules out there. A guy named Khan has recently published a big book about his years of doing DMT experiences, and he keeps talking about these entities, they keep coming up on the right side, this is where the sensed presence phenomenon often manifests. It's thought to be a manifestation of the way in which the right hemisphere is producing this orientation to somebody out there that would need to pay attention to it.

I'm from Missouri, so show me! Show me that there are these entities that can engage in these kinds of abstract, complex, human cognitive activities, verifiable interactions between different sessions, different people. I'm very pleased that some of the people here have made plans to do those kinds of experiments. I'll sign up for the study! Thank you!

DISCUSSION OF

Visionary Experiences, Entities, and Alien Worlds: A Natural Evolved Psychology

VIMAL DARPAN: The innate modules you describe mainly operate within the reptilian part of the brain responsible for social rituals, conditioning, so on and so forth, and you say it inhibits the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible, as you said, for planning, sequential thought, past/future notions. Then how do you explain the EEG exercise that has been done on meditators and on people taking ayahuasca, where it's actually the frontal cortex that lights up, where all the action is, which tends to give the experiencer a sense of oneness beyond this causal sense of before and after, or the sense of any kind of conceptual thought. It is an immersion into a sense of being here now, and sense of expansion rather than being a diminishing of them. It might involve a diminishing of prefrontal activity, but it actually enhances the frontal lobe of the brain. This is something you didn't approach in your talk.

MICHAEL WINKELMAN: OK, let me start off by saying that if we are going to understand the effects of psychedelics on the brain we have to differentiate between different dose levels, and differentiate between phasic effects. What happens in the first fifteen minutes is different from what's happening two hours in, so there can be different kinds of brain effects at different stages. And I would propose that if we're going to try and understand these entity experiences, we have to be very clear about the sequence, what appears when. Now, in terms of the psychedelics lighting up the prefrontal cortex, I'm not aware of these studies. I have heard of one study, from other people, that the guy didn't know what he was doing, he couldn't even run the machine right! So, we need to have results that are repeated again and again, to get reliable knowledge about what's happening in the brain. We also have to look at individual differences, not everybody is going to respond the same way to these substances.

So, I would say that there is a lot of different variation in terms of dose, drug, phase, and the individual that may account for why sometimes it appears that there is increased activity in the frontal cortex. But I think, in general, my general model of the alteration of consciousness is that the frontal cortex is being taken offline, and there's a lot of research out now about meditation and the default mode network. But there's one study that

shows that if you do zazen walking meditation it's totally different in terms of what happens in the brain than in these other kinds of restive meditations. So, it may be that if the somatic nervous system is functioning, like when you're walking, you're going to get a different profile of brain manifestation than you would with these other ones. But I can't give a specific answer as to why the studies you're referring to show those results.

CHRIS TIMMERMANN: Based on the fact that we see that a lot of topdown processes also disengage on non-tryptamine psychedelics, and it seems like the entity phenomena has a certain specificity to the tryptamines, namely DMT and psilocybin, there seem to be certain repeatable features. But the brain mechanisms there appear to be similar, in terms of the top-down inhibitions, so do you have a hypothesis or idea about this thing?

WINKELMAN: My general notion is that all of these forms of altered consciousness involve a debilitation of the normal frontal capacities, and that's pretty clear I think across the board. I mean, there may be specific exceptions, but in general it seems like we have compromised language, speech, being able to solve a math problem, talk coherently, and it doesn't seem to make a whole lot of difference which psychedelic you use, we tend to lose these high-level, uniquely human frontal capacities and we revert back to the kinds of capacities that are managed by the paleomammalian brain, the limbic system! So, as to why, specifically, one particular substance, I don't know. If you're talking about ketamine or about . . .

TIMMERMANN: Even LSD, it seems like the entity phenomena is kind of present.

WINKELMAN: I have to leave that to the neurophysiologists. How is it that LSD acts a little differently? We may ultimately have to go to explanations like morphogenic fields, morphogenic resonance; it may be that ayahuasca experiences tend to produce a typical kind of profile because there's been hundreds, if not thousands, of years of people using these substances with a specific kind of cosmology and that it's created a field that leads other people to experience their own internal perturbations in a way that's modeled by these external mental fields. Ultimately those kinds of notions may be important to explain differences. LSD doesn't have a long historical tradition of people using it for spiritual practices, it's basically seventy

years old, so it may be that the features that occur under LSD have to do with the belief systems that people who have used it have brought to the experience.

Dennis McKenna: I don't think that the idea of morphogenic fields is, you know, accepted widely in any sense, but it's also an interesting idea . . .

Winkelman: Well you're probably using *proof* a little loosely here, there are certainly experiments that verify the hypothesis of it. Is it widely accepted? No! But just because it's not widely accepted doesn't mean it isn't true. But, sure, you always think yourself farther out on a limb to explain one phenomena with respect to another phenomena, I encountered that when I was doing my dissertation.

McKenna: But essentially, you're so far out on the limb the whole thing collapses!

Winkelman: Well, you know when I was in graduate school, they were telling me that you can't explain anything about shamanism by reference to studies of hypnosis; they occur in different cultures. But I think we can. We now know from brain-imaging studies the similarities in a variety of different altered states of consciousness. So, I think if we're studying psychedelic entities, and we're trying to explain these, we ought to put a lot of different hypotheses on the table, not with the idea that we definitively prove one or the other, but we try to get cumulative evidence that gives us an indication of what kinds of hypotheses seem to have more coherence, more supporting evidence!

McKenna: Well, I'm with you on that, I think the thing that struck me was what you said earlier, in the end all we have is experience, everything we experience is experience. So, it's real to us, and then you start saying, "Well I have this experience, but it wasn't really there." Well where is *there*—inside, outside? These terms sort of become very fluid and lose their meaning when we're talking about this sort of thing, in other words, an entity. You experience an entity, it's in your head, but is it out there somewhere? In some other dimension if that's what you mean by "there"? These terms can't really be used in precise ways, I think that's what makes it difficult to think about these phenomena. Everything we experience in

some way is a reflection of a neurochemical brain state of some kind, would you agree? I mean whether you're on a drug or not is irrelevant.

WINKELMAN: I would put it this way in that, no, not necessarily. I like the model of the television: You want to understand the program on the television, you can take that television apart, you're not going to find the program. But the television has to be on and tuned to get the program. Just because we experience it doesn't mean it's inherently a phenomenon of the brain. I would also say that we have a very technical vocabulary to use, and I avoided using philosophical vocabulary, in part because I'm not a philosopher, but I think the Kantian notion of noumena versus phenomena is very useful here.

MCKENNA: Yes!

WINKELMAN: Kant was concerned with what are these transcendental realities, things that exist apart from our perception, versus just what is the content of experience. I think that by studying the content of experience we can begin to make valid inferences about noumena, in the sense that, if we all have the same kinds of experiences under relatively similar circumstances, it starts to suggest that it doesn't have something to do with your particular background, culture, or condition, but it's something that transcends the individual. And I think, in that sense, we can begin to use the systematic study of the phenomena of psychedelic entity to learn something about them, and if they can engage in the kinds of experiments that the Society for Psychical Research did, like with mediumship, communication with the dead. Maybe we will convince them that they can give some money to this!

[audience laughs]

GUY HARRIMAN: I'd like to comment from the perspective of the Ajna Light technology, using flashing light, because they're very precise signals that are highly repeatable. You referred to the frames that can definitely happen, people see at certain frequencies at the gamma, they get multiple universes or realities coming, also with the Klüver forms, the four basic ones, and how they're all brought together, that's in the hyper column region of the V1 cortex. It looks like they are highly reproducible, you can

create these form factors with specific frequencies. Of course, biochemically that's much harder to determine because you don't know what the interaction is on those levels, but at least with flashing lights you see it. Now I think that explains the entoptic vision very clearly and that can include mandalas and other cross-cultural ancient symbols that you see from many, many different traditions, but the eidetic visions, which I think you're referring to, more of the highly personal anthropological phenomenon, the cultural aspects, that doesn't show up so much. In other words, you can take exactly the same light stimulation, exactly the same music and apply it to the same person on two different days and get very different outcomes. So, something else is going on. I can't answer what it is, but my way of describing it is that it acts as a mirror of consciousness. In other words the perceiver, like Dennis is saying, is in the controlling seat of the experience.

WINKELMAN: Like the meditative traditions say, you can't step into the same river twice. We are never the same person from one day to the next. As doubting as I may be about the entity experiences, I have no doubt that extrasensory perception occurs, which then opens up a whole new dimension as to the sources of these experiences, do we tap into the experiences psychically?

DANIEL PINCHBECK: I just had a couple of thoughts. First of all I thought that some of the stuff around mediumship and channeling was really impressive. I remember reading that they did an experiment with this recently deceased chess player and he was playing with the game endings of his time and so on, and it seems like there's a lot of evidence that's quite interesting that the Society for Psychical Research discovered around channeling and all sorts of psychic phenomena. So, I was surprised that you dismissed that really quickly. I felt that your hypotheses were kind of straw men a little bit: there's not any reason to think that there are extradimensional nonterrestrial entities; they might be capable of ordinary complex, human social activities, but they may not want to relate to us in that way; they may be relating to us in a way that's different, that we can't yet understand their motivations. So, to think they're going to be cooperating with experiments to me seems highly unlikely. I recall Ouspensky and Gurdjieff, where they discuss that any psychic fact that

happens is very contingent on a particular set of circumstances, in a particular time and space and even an emotional quality, there may be a whole new set of qualia that have to be understood to be able to understand the validity or nonvalidity of entities. And I think to reduce it to the way you did is almost like setting up a straw man, which is of course not going to be what you're going to discover.

WINKELMAN: It's like when a lot of people who have the entity experiences come away with the sense that this is a very important message, they really want us to know this, they're trying to help us out, they're trying to save humanity kind of thing. And if that's true then they say, "Well I'm not going to prove that I'm real here!" It seems to me, to say that there are these beings that are beyond us that have all these complex capabilities that supersede human beings, and yet they're not going to want to prove anything about their existence, is sort of like the priest saying, "God's not going to come down here to prove his existence."

PINCHBECK: But we don't actually know yet why and how they're communicating, and why they choose to communicate or interact in this way. To set up hypotheses that are so limiting is setting up for failure, so I don't understand. It's just something to think about.

WINKELMAN: I mean I've thought about that too. You can't really train your cat, of course your cat is real, but we're postulating that there's something, I presume, at least, as complex as us if not more complex, that they can then cooperate in the ways that we want them to.

PINCHBECK: But they might have a whole different reason for communicating. In certain respects, maybe, we'd have to go to the ideas of somebody like Rudolf Steiner to even begin to understand these other levels of supersensible existence of cognition and so on.

WINKELMAN: Well, if they have something important for us to know then they ought to be able to interact with us in ways that provide some kind of . . .

PINCHBECK: That's just your own bias.

WINKELMAN: Yeah, it's a scientific bias.

HARRIMAN: If it is metaphorical maybe we are making a mistake in being dualistic here, that separating them and us rather than them standing in a different fractal aspect of ourselves, creates a false need for understanding something that really isn't separate.

WINKELMAN: Yeah, and that would probably be my hypothesis, it *is* us!

HARRIMAN: So, we can categorize it as "other," but that's like a deification of our higher self rather than identification with our higher self.

ANGELA VOSS: I'm not a scientist, I come more from a philosophical position perhaps, but it seems to me like spiritual traditions have always posited that the rational mind is in service to a cognitive function that lies beyond it, imaginative, intuitive, symbolic if you like. So, I think there is a problem in looking at phenomena that maybe find a place in the nonrational mind through the rational mind, in which case they may easily become reduced to being examined by the function of the rational mind. So, I think you can either commit yourself to a vision of entities as related to brain functions or to a vision that opens up into transpersonal psychology, or looking to areas that go beyond the rational mind. It does seem to me that we're going to need *both* taken into very serious consideration, and not a predominance given to rational explanation.

WINKELMAN: If I follow you, I will respond by saying, yes, I think that we need to recognize the role of the, not irrational, but maybe the nonrational mind or a prerational mind in all of these experiences. And that's the innate modules! They just respond to stimuli, they don't think about it or contemplate about it—input in, response out. That is the a-rational, prerational, nonrational function of the brain that operates below the level of consciousness.

VOSS: That's more rational language.

WINKELMAN: Well, language is rational. I don't know what language we would use.

DAVID LUKE: What of the symbolic dream language?

WINKELMAN: OK!

ANTON BILTON: It's interesting you focus very much on the figurative form of the human or animal and a lot of focus on the face, but I don't think I'm alone in experiencing things that are indescribable and they seem to have alternate sentient presence. Why am I experiencing them as "other" and intelligent with life, and if that's not from your hyperactive agent detection device, which would be figurative, like a human in the undergrowth, are they friend or foe? When you're seeing things that you've never seen before in your life and there it is, moving, animated, and conversing with you, and it feels more real than real, where's that coming from?

WINKELMAN: Well let me say something about things feeling "more real than real," and this is a quote from Paul Maclean: "It seems that the ancient limbic system provides the ingredients for the strong affective feeling or conviction that what we attach to our beliefs is true, whether or not they are true or false." When we activate the limbic brain, this is real, and you see this often in psychedelic experiences. People say, "I know this is happening!" But it hadn't happened, but in the moment, no doubt! Now where your personal experiences come from I can't say, but what I would propose is a general model for understanding not only aspects of psychedelic experience but one of the predominate features of meditative experience, the void. You're taking everything offline, there's nothing left to process any kind of information, all that is left is your own self-awareness, and that's why you experience void. It may be a very reductionist notion of what meditation leads you to, but if you read carefully, many meditative scholars will say that, "Yeah, you've got to withdraw the senses." You don't input any more energy into the senses, you withdraw all energy from the emotional systems, you basically take all your systems offline, and then you're in the void!

BILTON: Well I call that going into witness state, when you lose emotionality you lose all ego, and in my practice, when taking ayahuasca, that's what I go to, the witness state. Once you let go of everything I think this is where you find the gatekeepers of created fear that test that, and it's only when you become fearless that you access the void, or the wisdom states. But even when I've done all that and sitting in pure witness, no judgment, no thought, there's still a sense of some alternate intelligence

that's communing with me, and it's not figurative. It's not, "Oh, there's a face in the undergrowth!" or an animal I should be wary of. I can describe loads of moving coral-like shapes under the sea, the sort of art that Kandinsky or Miro proposes, just wavering lines of spirit whizzing around and when you're in that realm you don't objectify that to anything, but you know its communing with you and it seems to be intelligent and sentient. I just touch on that hyperactive agent detection thing you brought up, and I get it, but I think there's something beyond that that certainly is a mystery to me.

WINKELMAN: I think the meditative traditions have tried to provide a variety of explanations about what kind of experiences occur during these profound meditative states, I think there may be some very good guidelines for psychedelic entity research as well, they don't go to the notion that there are these entities but they do go to the notion that the universe is sentient, the universe is consciousness. But is it an entity or is it just like gravity, that's everywhere? They may go for the latter thing.

BILTON: The description of an entity to me is just alternate sentient presence, it doesn't matter whether it's the void, but if you're sensing within the void that it's alive or it's intelligent that's enough. The general definition of entity to me is "anything that's external from us and the mindscape."

WINKELMAN: One of the points I want to make is that people often say, "I never imagined anything like that before, I've never seen anything like my vision." And I would say, well that's true, but people who write great novels didn't think about it before they wrote it, painters who make great paintings didn't see anything like that before. And often you talk with people who have authored incredible books, they'll say, "Well, you know, I didn't invent this, I just started writing, it just started coming out of me." Every time it's just ideas waiting to be written down. To me it's clear that we can have experiences that are beyond our previous experience and imaginations, some of us have those every night in dreams, we don't have to attribute some external entity as the source of it.

LUKE: I liked your idea of getting someone else's entity to communicate to your entity, and then communicating to you and thereby transferring some kind of entity information. A great head start for entitiology, taking less of a

reductive approach, and first trying to test this thing at face value. So that's more like Strassman's theoneurology approach rather than neurotheology, which was the second half of what you gave, how can we think about these entities and reduce them into brain states and innate modules and all the rest of it. However, that side of things seems to be more deductive than inductive. Can you offer up a specific hypothesis whereby we could actually test this? Because at the minute it's still in the realm of, "Well it's a good explanation," which I think you've done an excellent job of showing the territory and how we *can* explain these things in terms of brain function. How can we actually then test that to find evidence in the same way in which we would test if we got entities to communicate with each other? How can we do that from the neurotheological perspective?

WINKELMAN: I think there are two separate questions here, and one is, Can we analyze the phenomena to infer something about noumena? Something that is beyond our perception, but that is structuring the fundamental reality that we perceive. The ideas of, "How can we do these controlled experiments?" is that the second part of it?

LUKE: Well in terms of your more neurotheological explanation, in terms of these innate modules and all the face recognition, innate structuring of the brain, yes it's all there, it's a good *explanation* for why we have these entity encounters. But it doesn't give us any evidence to be predictive and inductive and say that there is some hypothesis that can test that notion. Can we give some evidence to show that?

WINKELMAN: If I understand—and I'm going to say that, yes, both sides have testable hypotheses—on one side, interdisciplinary crosscultural study of basically, What are the features that occur? And do they match up with these features that can be derived from innate modules? I think, on the other hand, if we're trying to test the reality of these entities, I don't think that the neurotheological model provides a framework for proving or establishing their existence, but it does provide a framework for explaining why we have these experiences. If our efforts to establish their existence don't come through, my prediction's going to be that it's because they're not capable of manifesting these higher cognitive processes. They don't do that!

LUKE: I guess we're at a kind of impasse until we find evidence that they do, we can only fall back on the neuro explanations for it rather than giving any hard evidence determining the ontology of the beings themselves. We can only offer explanations. Just to come back, and I really like the idea of mapping the phenomenology, it's really important, I think *there are* some commonalties of some features and I think it transcends psychedelics, to all altered states, for instance the encounters with insectoids seems to pop up in quite a lot of DMT experiences. And I think Whitley also had some kind of abduction experience, or encounter experiences of that variety as well, so you see it popping up not just with psychedelics, but it does just seem to be specific to this kind of complex, in a Jungian sense. It could be spontaneous DMT experiences, who knows, but there's a commonality between alien abduction, elf encounters, and DMT experiences in which we seem to have experiences that are quite core, and you don't find in the mystical religious traditions people encountering praying mantises, for instance, apart from among the !Kung bushman perhaps.

WINKELMAN: I've got a hypothesis for that. I'm going to propose that these insectoid experiences are going to be at the most profound level of effects of DMT, but where we still have enough consciousness left to grasp and report it. This is going to be something really fundamental and basic about the brain. When you look at people's reports about insectoid experiences, they're not trying to communicate with us; they couldn't care less about us! As we move out of the most profound DMT experiences, and the brain is starting to come back online, we're going to get something that more approaches, "Oh they're looking at me, they're concerned about me, they're thinking about me, they're talking about me." There's going to be a sequence in the experiences, and it's going to reflect the different areas of deactivation and reactivation in the brain.

LUKE: That's a good hypothesis because *that* we can test!

DARPAN: You describe the faculties of, say, an author or a poet or filmmaker, where they can imagine it, a certain world, and describe it in great detail. Usually that's called the faculties of higher mind, the part of the mind that lights up when you're in that aha moment, when perhaps Einstein thought of $E=mc^2$ or Crick thought of the DNA spiral, those moments. I find that hard to reduce down to these innate modules. I do agree with you

that much about behavior can be explained by these innate modules, but the higher mind, I disagree with you that meditation should be lumped down toward the innate modules.

WINKELMAN: I don't think that higher mind equals higher cognitive processing, and let me give you an explanation. First is that Newberg and d'Aquili actually postulated a eureka module.

[audience laughs]

Which is these spontaneous solutions to problems that occur. We know that many times people solve problems in their dreams, like the discovery of the structure of the benzene molecule came out of a dream. These are not higher cognitive processes, rather these are clearly processes that are predominantly associated with the paleomammalian brain. The third point I want to make here, and one that I wanted to bring into the talk, but didn't have time to, is this notion of the fantasy mode of cognitive processing. Fifty years ago, the philosopher Susanne Langer proposed a presentational mode of symbolism, the idea that the visual system that we experience is symbolic; it's kind of a metaphoric visual symbol system that conveys meaning and this is the system that's getting activated.

It's an ancient form of knowing that human beings have, and things that we experience through this visual system can provide very complex solutions to problems. We can visualize the solution to problems in ways that we can't necessarily talk out or write the equations to construct it. While you may call it the higher mind, I'm still going to propose that it really is a re-elevation of ancient brain structures, and that the capacity of the visual system to represent complex information, such as in dreaming, is well recognized, and this system is available to us when we take the frontal lobe out of the picture. And it's more integrated; the frontal lobe typically ignores everything that's going on with these lower brain structures.

In essence, we're talking about the brain that got us to the human beings that we were two hundred thousand to forty thousand years ago, when language started becoming important and humans had very complex activities and discoveries, creations, buildings, before we were a spoken language species. So, I think I would agree with your notion about higher

mental processes, but not confuse that with the higher-level cognitive processing associated with language. To me, it's a really important feature here. We've got to get an understanding of this other system, whether we call it fantasy mode or presentational symbolism; it's very complex but it's also very rudimentary. Your dog can watch television and understand what's going on, she likes Lassie, because she connects with Lassie and that Lassie is something she can understand. This is an ancient form of cognitive processing that's been totally neglected by modern psychology and modern science because it's not accessible for easy study. It's hard for me to get any idea what images are going on inside your visual systems, your brain, your experience.

DARPAN: I understand where you're coming from, and I think that's part of the truth. However, when we take ayahuasca for example, and many people are born like this naturally, there's a certain synesthesia that happens where we can see sounds or smell touch or a crossover of sense happens, and you can probably explain that. However it would seem that the leap that brought language into our culture, that the next evolutionary leap is something that ayahuasca is leaning toward, is that perhaps we're moving to a realm that a group like the cetaceans are moving in—where they're having, rather than a language, they're starting to use sound and carrier wave for intention. In other words, they're transmitting 3-D holographic imagery through the carrier wave of sound rather than modules of bits and pieces of verbal symbols that we decode in our brain, which may or may not be the same as how the person intended it. If you and I both hold that jug, there's no ambiguity; however if you take the jug away and I tried to describe it, you may not see what I'm seeing, so there's an inherent limitation of language. And although there's a great leap in our consciousness of human beings, perhaps we are standing on the borderline or at the threshold of the next evolutionary leap that has perhaps already been taken by the cetacean family.

WINKELMAN: Pictures tell a thousand words. Indeed!

CHAPTER 3

Entheogens, Radical Empiricism, and the Nature of Reality

Ralph Metzner

I've come to and have been evolving conclusions, maybe, that I'm going to present from my book *Ecology of Consciousness,* which is kind of a distillation summary of my research area over the last twenty years and my work creating the Green Earth Foundation. William James—one of my heroes or guides, you could say, or mentors, and his ideas on radical empiricism, which I give to my weltanschauung, my worldview—said, "To be radical an empiricism must neither admit into its construction any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced." The second statement is what makes it radical. See, the first statement is just the conventional empirical thing; you have date, then you have observation, then you have the theory. But then the second part is what makes it radical.

The modern practice of empirical research does not adhere to that because there's certain data that's being excluded before being considered, for example all the data from parapsychology and all the data with any reference to spirits or seeing things that are not materially visible. He wrote

this over a hundred years ago and it far exceeds in philosophical depth the belief system of current science, current worldview.

Another one of my heroes, the Dalai Lama, said a very similar thing: "If the scientific study of consciousness is ever to grow to full maturity, given that subjectivity is a primary element of consciousness, it will have to incorporate a fully developed and rigorous methodology of first person empiricism." Again, our empirical research can only say, "The subject said so and so, he said this, or this other person said that." You can't refer to subjective experiences. In other words, the Dalai Lama is saying that's a philosophical aim that is not acceptable and the Buddhist traditions have developed a very sophisticated language over thousands of years, so have the Hindus and Indian traditions of first-person empiricism—systematically observing and comparing observations of internal states.

Here's another statement of William James that I like a lot: "The mind is at every stage a theater of simultaneous possibilities." A theater of simultaneous possibilities is being presented to us, and then my experience is what I agree or choose to attend to. Of all the possibilities that are presented to me I choose to attend to certain ones. I thought about that: What about if I'm in a jail and I'm being tortured? That's my experience. But notice he's not saying that I'm not choosing the situation; I can't choose the situation, but I can choose whether to attend to it or not. What do people do when they're in a Chinese prison or being tortured? They dissociate, they don't attend, "I'm outta here." So this statement is generally true.

The title of one part of my book *Mind Space and Time Stream* incorporates the underlying philosophical worldview of all states of consciousness, as our reality conceptions involve space and time, or spacetime continuum according to science. So time is experienced as a stream; mind is experienced as space.

In Buddhism, mind is experienced as empty space and there's a Western view that's a little bit like that. Kovsky has an idea a little bit like that, but I will defer to the physicalists about that, where time is considered the fourth dimension and the first three are reality.

The states of consciousness that we are in always involve our mindspace and a time stream where we are in a period of time—a segment of time—that time can be experienced rapidly or slowly and be expanded or contracted and narrowed down, and similarly with the space.

I work a lot with the life cycle. This is the idea of the triple deity, the triple god, the triple goddess—the maiden, mother, and the crone is traditional—so three stages of the lifecycle. All experiences that we have are embedded in a lifecycle. Where the experiences, for example, of psychedelics on a young person are different from a person in the middle period of their life or a person in the elder period of their life, where they are aware of death, so a threefold division of a lifecycle is presented in the image of the triple goddess: maiden, mother, and crone.

I look a lot toward the traditions of alchemy. I think of alchemy as kind of a Western expression of what is also called shamanism, and what in the East is called the yogic tradition. Shamanism, alchemy, and yoga are sort of a trio of worldviews that involve certain conceptions on every level, certain ideas, certain practices, such as the physical healing practices, and also a spiritual belief system. In other words, there's not a separation of the spiritual aspects or the religious aspects from the others; they are all integrated. So, we have four primary strands of awareness, we have many more possibilities, but you want to think of these as streams of awareness that are going on all the time.

There are streams of thoughts and ideas and cognitive processes that are going on all the time, plus visual imagery—people nowadays think of those as left-brain and right-brain focused. Streams of emotions, feelings, and consciousness, affects, and then streams of body sensations, tactile, kinesthetic, thermal, et cetera.

Now we may or may not be aware of them all the time. For example, most of us at the present time are focused on the realms of thoughts and ideas and cognitive processes that you know as well as anyone, and we all know that at different times of the day, for example, some of these other streams and strands will also be coming into our awareness, and that they're going on all the time. And if you are having a psychedelic or mind-expanding experience, then some of these other things will be coming into awareness. Or if you're having a therapeutic experience, or if you're meditating, you might be concentrating and actively bringing bodily sensations into your awareness.

And contrariwise, the processes of dissociation and disconnection can also affect these different strands differently; for example as a psychotherapist, or any type of therapist, would know and will know,

people can have memories, for example, of thoughts and cognitive processes of events that happened but the emotions normally connected to those events are screened off. The person may describe, “I had this really traumatic thing,” but as if they didn’t experience the feelings. They did experience it, but they dissociated, so then the work of psychotherapy involves bringing them up into awareness.

I have different ways of looking at consciousness and trying to define it, so here’s another way. It’s possible to distinguish between an ordinary habitual function and the same function done consciously with intention and with context. Think about the difference between perception and apperception. When I was at Harvard one of my professors that I liked the most was Henry Murray; he invented a test called the thematic apperception test.

Those of you who are clinical psychologists will probably remember this, where you look at a black-and-white picture of people in different postures, there’s no text, they’re in dialogue with each other and then you make up the story for it, something like a Rorschach ink blot test. The idea is that you are projecting unconsciously, that you are perceiving the context. Not just perceiving the object, but perceiving almost like a halo of meaning around the thing.

So, it’s possible to distinguish sympathy and empathy in a similar way, sympathy is an automatic instinctual reaction. I distinguish it sometimes with a little story: A man is walking down the street and there’s a man ten feet deep down in a hole. Sympathetic reaction would be you jump into the hole and then you have two people in the hole and if they have a good cry together, it’s nicer, better to be together than alone. Empathy would be, “Oh you’re in a hole, let me get a ladder.” So there’s a sympathy reaction that’s instinctive, but there’s an element of conscious consciousness added to it in how to resolve the situation.

And then you can distinguish knowledge, knowing information, facts versus wisdom or understanding. The idea of reaction, automatic, stimulus reaction versus response, which involves responsibility, consciously chosen response. And orientation, you know an animal orients, if we heard a lot of noise we would orient toward the noise or a brilliant light, we would orient toward that, automatic, instinctive, unconscious.

Or we can pay attention. I like the concept of paying attention. It's a gift; you give me a gift of intention. Most concepts, it's interesting, it's doing something, it's not just sitting there, you see. So in a way you're giving me a gift of your intention/attention, for which I appreciate that gift and I wouldn't take it for granted, not necessarily, because we've all been in situations where you're talking to somebody and they're not paying attention. The parent says to the child, "You're not paying attention," the teacher says to their student, so their expectation, impulse, desire all refers to a kind of movement of your awareness, a movement toward. You can symbolize it by an arrow. I'm moving toward it, I want this, I'm going to do this, I expect this versus intention, you see, or interest consciously chosen intention. I think intention is the key to consciousness, into all states of consciousness.

Becoming conscious of your intention—and I understand that there have been some most recent research studies where now they've picked up from certain brain wave impulses like microseconds, hundreds of thousandths of a second before, in a situation where a person is choosing to make a choice between one button or another button, and they can pick up a flash, in a certain area of the cortex, of the intention microseconds before the person actually makes the choice.

And then sensing is just sensing. Clairsentience is the idea like clairvoyance, sensing more clearly things that are ordinarily not, so there's a degree of sensitivity. Habitual thinking versus mindful thinking, consciously thinking, or mindfulness. And dreaming versus lucid dreaming. As you know in Tibetan yoga they have a whole yogic system of becoming conscious in your dreaming intentionally, so that's one way of thinking about consciousness. That's a way of adding something to our ordinary functions.

This is what I call a heuristic model, meaning it doesn't really explain anything, but it helps you understand altered states and the original idea was about set and setting. That idea of set and setting—which has been widely influential and widely accepted in the fields of studies of states of consciousness—was actually due to Tim Leary, that was his contribution, and it's obviously true.

And there is always some kind of trigger or catalyst that triggers an altered state of consciousness, a trigger like, for example, taking a drug, or

hearing a loud noise, or some sort of traumatic event. But it can also be cyclical variations, for example, you go into a state of sleep and the sleep hormones in your brain are varying on a twenty-four-hour cycle, so it's the wakefulness hormones variations, melatonin and so forth, that trigger the movement into a different state of consciousness from the waking state.

Before your experience you are influenced by intention, expectation, personality, mood—those are all internal factors—and then setting, the environmental, physical, and social contexts where you're having the altered state. Set is primary because the set also determines what setting you choose. For instance, if you choose the meditation setting you choose a meditation hall.

During that time period, during that divisional time of the altered state, there are alterations in the way you think, in the way you feel, perceptions, and sensations, but now those can all change; we can have different thoughts, different feelings, different perceptions, and we don't necessarily say we are in a different state of consciousness. But then if the sense of time and space changes then you begin to wonder—things are a little different really, things look different—that's one of the things about psychedelic drugs, is that they change your perception of reality. Things may be slowed down or expanded, and then your body image changes to the point where you might grow into a purely abstract space where you have no body image whatsoever.

Your sense of self and identity change. People talk about ego death, that's definitely a change in your sense of identity. So you see, it's a matter of degree to which the consciousness is altered from the so-called normal state. Let me continue with this three-part thing. After a certain time period, the timeline goes along and there's a return to a baseline state, now the time period can be long. LSD sessions can last ten hours or longer even sometimes; MDMA sessions can last two or three hours, maybe four, depending if they have boosters in their sessions; DMT can last a few minutes, or less than a minute sometimes, before you return to the baseline state. Then in the baseline state you start to think about what happened and so you want to separate them and separate the interpretation of what happened—the changes that I just experienced, were they good or bad, were they positive, do they have positive consequences? Not just were they pleasant or unpleasant, but do they have positive consequences in terms of

whether they are going to change my behavior, or am I going to change my behavior as a result of those kinds of things? Or suppose I am addicted to something, and I have an insight into addiction. I still have the choice of going back to the addiction, and that's a known fact. Some people may have an insight into the addiction and evaluate it as not a good thing and then say, "Well what the hell I'm going to go back to it anyway," or, "I can't stop myself."

So, that's just kind of a heuristic model that helps you to think about it. This is what I call my core formula, my $E=mc^2$, and it incorporates the previous model as a special case. You have intention; intention leads to, but is followed by, not causes, attention. You have the intention of hearing my talk, therefore you are paying me attention and you're aware of what I'm saying. At both points the sequence can be interrupted. For instance, you have the attention but suppose there was a loud noise or something outside the door, or a naked woman or a naked man walks in the door, then our attention would be captured; it would shift and then maybe shift back to the intention. It's not causal; it's triggered or leads to. It's a vector; in mathematics I think you would say it's a vector, it has a direction.

That leads to an awareness, but that can also not happen, because if you're not paying attention to me you might become aware of something else, or you might become aware of something else because you have a nagging pain in your knee or something that captures your attention.

Now, back to the intentional question—these are like two primary modes or variations of intention, like hunting and gathering variations. Think of a hunter who is narrowly focused, like when stalking. I remember watching my cat sitting at a window watching a bird that she couldn't get that was on the outside of the window. She was incredibly focused: her whiskers were going *vzzzzzz;* her tail was going *vzzzzz*. I could not distract her attention. It's the same way with a nursing infant. I remember my nursing infant at the breast. I can't say look over here; it zeroes in on the breast with total focus. In hunting you want the focus.

Now gathering is a very different kind of attention. You're looking around, you see. It's not focused. You're looking around. It's circumspection. Where are you going to find the herb? "I'm going to find this herb over here or here." It's cautious. It's also like predator consciousness and like prey consciousness. Predator consciousness is

focused, looking for the prey, very focused on that, not distracted. Prey consciousness is looking around. Think of the deer with the ears swiveling, the big eyes catching the mildest stimulus. We have both of those modes of consciousness of course. They're the two primary modes of consciousness. When we're going shopping, it's like gathering, right? Shopping, gathering, looking for things we might like, for where we'd like to eat or whatever. Hunting is like going to hunt for a car or whatever or a job. These are very primary.

Now, another way to think about alterations of consciousness is the sphere. The energy field, the awareness field, of the human body, of our awareness, is spherical. Spherical all around the body, six directions: vertical, up-down; horizontal, left-right; horizontal, front-back. Think of it as a sphere with three axes, six directions. Our awareness can expand in all those directions, and it can contract. You can think of this baseline state of consciousness. There's a selection, think of it as maybe 30 degrees. This state of consciousness is about 30 degrees of a total circle, so one way to visualize an expansion of consciousness means my awareness would expand all the way around. As you already know that's one of the characteristic perceptual changes that people feel when they take things like LSD; they feel they can look around the entire human 360 degrees. In other words they can see all around to your back. It is actually fairly common.

My friend Rupert Sheldrake wrote a whole book on the sense of being stared at, where he showed that people can consciously perceive when somebody behind them is looking at them. Think of an elevator. When you're in an elevator, you are actually literally in each other's space, because when you're in each other's space, your energy field is several feet, fifteen to twenty feet or more around you. That means it's a sensitivity field you are sensing, and so everybody's very well behaved and sort of pulls their wings in in an elevator and doesn't make a move because you're in each other's space in a very kind of intimate way, but we respect that space. So, an expansion of consciousness can be thought of, and in psychedelic states it's not uncommon for people to say, "Oh I'm sensing what's going on beside me and I'm aware it's an expansion of consciousness," usually perceptual consciousness, and maybe at the other dimensions as well.

As for the contracted state, that's called concentration. That would be when the angle becomes 5 degrees rather than 30 degrees. Concentration is

not a bad thing; it's a necessary function. We have to be able to concentrate. I'm concentrating on this computer, if I'm doing surgery, or I'm playing the piano or using any skill, any actual functional capability, you want to be able to have the contractions and the expansion under your intentional control. If they are not under your intentional control, then that's another whole story, and then you'll go to a therapist and find out. Chronic fixations are called addictions. You want to fixate on the same thing over and over, or obsessions, something like that.

The third possibility is dissociation, like switching the channels. It's not an expansion of consciousness, but you're looking at a different part of a spectrum. It's sort of like switching the channel on TV, you're still looking at the TV, but you're switching the channel. This process of dissociation is a very poorly understood concept in psychology. It was much more profoundly influential in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century with people like Pierre Janet and so forth. Freud, as you know, formulated theories as a conscious intentional moving away from the dissociation concept. He had this model of the id and ego, with the id sort of pushing the ego down. That was not Pierre Janet's idea. The unconscious is not necessarily this alternative view, which I think is the correct one. Dissociated states of consciousness are not necessarily like primitive id. Freud's idea is the id is sort of an animal thing and we have to evolve beyond it and be like a human ego. Dissociation can be at any level of complexity and intensity. The soldiers on a battlefield who dissociate, they're not dealing with the unconscious id impulses, they're dealing with attacks coming at them; they're fully functional, with all their rational capabilities and highly skilled perceptions, but triggered by traumatic experiences and fear into a different, real, response reaction.

This is a model for understanding variations and states of consciousness that are very common every day and don't necessarily involve expansions or contractions of consciousness. Well they might, but these are very high energy, on a vertical axis. Then the left-right dimension is hedonic, from pleasure to pain. Every state of consciousness is really somewhere in these dimensions.

If you go up the diagonal line you have excitement, highly energized, then euphoria, peak experiences, ecstasy, and that's where MDMA resides. Orgasm, that's kind of a peak experience. Then if you go down it's a

positive state, sort of relaxation, you're not so functional, you don't have much energy, you just want to lie around, the effects of marijuana might be there, relaxing, tranquility. Then if you go deeper, less conscious, there's something called the absorptive trance; they use that in hypnosis. You might be absorbed, like in a film or piece of music, that you are basically *in,* and you are not aware of anything else.

I also distinguish orgasm to postorgasm. After the orgasmic high excitement there's the postorgasmic state, which is very tranquil and relaxing, no energy, very relaxing oftentimes associated with sleep. Then there's drugs that might go there, like GHB or ketamine, for example. Both go into that effect, not doing anything. Oceanic bliss might be a way to express that positive deep state. As you go up to the upper left you get more anxiety, but more unpleasant, so anxiety distress. You have more energy but it's unpleasant to have that energy. You are nervous, jittery, you might take a tranquilizer or anxiolytic drug all the way to extremes of fear, panic, peril, dysphoria. It's unpleasant, as opposed to euphoric. But fear, panic, terror is high energy, not tranquil. So you can distinguish between fear, panic, terror on the upper right to tension, sickness, exhaustion, and depression on the lower. You feel terrible, you have no energy to do anything, depression, no interest in doing anything, can't sleep. We all know those states. Under normal circumstances we fluctuate through these states in mild degrees, but we all know from our practice and experience that we can get fixated in one corner of these channels as well as others.

Across the top, there's a line. That's the stimulants. Drugs like caffeine, amphetamine, cocaine simply raise the energy level. Whether that raising of your energy level is pleasant or not depends on where you are starting from. Depends on what side of the thing you are. If you are in the anxiety state and you take a stimulant, you might get even more anxious unless you also have depression and you take the stimulant and you feel a little bit less depressed. At the same time, if you take a depressant and you're in the upper continuum, you may have less energy and therefore less energy going into anything aggressive. So alcohol basically just raises the arousal levels, the consciousness level, and this really doesn't add anything pleasant or unpleasant; it's slightly more pleasant to not feel aroused.

The point I'm trying to make here is that these drugs—the stimulants, depressants—these drugs move you unilaterally up and down. Whether it's

pleasant or unpleasant depends on what your starting point is; you don't expand your consciousness, actually, just the energy on the line.

You couldn't fit LSD into this quadrant because it would go all around. You could, within a short period of time, you could touch into all four of these corners and go beyond them. So I have what I call the Janus model. The Roman deity of doorways, passageways, and entrances, we have from him the name of the janitor. The janitor of the gods, he kept care of where the gods were coming and going from heaven. It's also the name of January, when the spring starts coming and winter goes out. And his image was put on the coins of the realm; you pay the coins when you go into a country or are leaving, you pay the customs officer, pay the visa, pay the passport. The coinage of the realm was Janus. That's why I call it the Janus model of divination and integration.

Divination is an ancient term for accessing knowledge from divine sources, meaning transpersonal sources. Things like the tarot, astrology, the I Ching, could be called divination tools, accessories, but the basic process is an internal mental process, because even if you're looking at the tarot deck or I Ching you always have to interpret that according to your intentional question. There is a timeline along the bottom, the present, that is the field of your awareness and identity, which the phenomenological philosopher called the personallife world. We each live in the personal-life world. We also live in a greater world that we share with other people, society, your family, the country, the nation state, and the world in general, but we each live in our personal-life world, which is what we are aware of, and so there's a timeline. All these processes, changes, involve a double movement both into the past and into the future, a movement of awareness into the past. Memory, regression, retrieval, recollection are all terms for accessing memory, and then there's remembering, which is one of the most interesting words in the English language as it's the opposite of dismembering.

Remembering is reconnecting what is disconnected, and so it points very clearly that it's a return. Just going back, just regression by itself is not enough. You have to bring the essences of what you learned, what happened in that experience, back into the present, and then you incorporate it into your present field of awareness. That's the difference between an alcoholic and ex-alcoholic, or an addict and a former addict. It doesn't deny and

remember, but has now integrated that experience so it's a past memory, no longer an active part of your identity, and I can say, "I am an ex-addict. I formerly was an alcoholic but I'm no longer now." I'm no longer driving along the freeway fixating on the rearview mirror that has the potential of pulling me off track and limiting my awareness of what's in front of me. Those of us that are in therapy, we work a lot with this whole process, recovering lost memories, how to move traumatic memories, and how to integrate them into your present field of awareness.

A similar process happens in the future; that's why we call it the Janus model because it's also accessing the future. I came to conclude it's easy to access the future; in fact, we are hardwired to access the future as easily as we are hardwired to access the past. It's perfectly symmetrical. When you think of wild animals, hunting animals are totally dependent on being able to anticipate where they're going to be going; they gather where they are going to be finding plants. But formally we call it foresight, planning, presentiment, or feelings.

Then we have vision. Vision means it's not just a bunch of pictures, it's a vision that says, "You can do this," or "You should do this," or "You want to do this," or "I want to do this," or some guidance. You have a guidance but then it's always a matter of choice. Do you follow the guidance or not? Just like with memory you can have a regression, a memory. But if you don't integrate the memory to the present it becomes just sort of an appendix there. If you have a vision but don't do anything about it, the vision has to be realized. If a little boy has a vision of going to be, or wanting to be, an astronaut at nine years old, well, to make the vision real he has to go to school and astronaut school, et cetera. Those are not foregone conclusions.

I would say the only difference in this model between future accessing and working with future and past, is that the future is probabilistic whereas the past happened the way it happened. Although we can change the way we hold it and think about it, we can't change the way it happened, and the future hasn't happened, it's happening every moment, it's happening every moment of every day, every week, every year, and we use vision and guidance then to direct our future in the directions that we want to go. So that's the Janus model, and I like the it because it's saying, "Be in the present, be open to the past and how the past may interfere," and, "Be open

to possibilities in the future so you can see the possibilities and the probabilities."

This is a verbal way of expressing that idea. Intentional memory with conscious integration is remembering and leads to healing and increased wholeness. Unconscious memory without integration is flashback, which leads to hopelessness and useless nostalgia. Intentional vision with conscious integration is inspiration—the spirit comes in and leads to realization and creative expression the ideal—create this thing, this project, this painting, whatever. Unconscious vision without integration is fantasy. Fantasy is not a vision and leads to pointless faith and pointless destruction. You can have lots of visions and fantasies and images and write lots of books and paintings in your mind. You can change the expression of course, fix it, but it takes intention to make it conscious. That's the idea.

And so now a little bit more about the personal-life world, the self-system. The systems view means relations are primary, not things, not objects, not persons. Relations are primary; there is nothing that we are that is not relational. Think about it. Every one of us has a mother and father. That's pretty basic to your identity, wouldn't you say? We couldn't be anybody, you couldn't be you, without a mother and father. You may also be a brother or sister. The systems thinking says some of it includes the feminist philosophy that relations are essentially constituted. You have relations or you don't. You can't not have relations.

Some people might say, "I don't have any relationships"—you might not like the relationships you have and you want different ones, or better ones, but you can't not have them, starting with mother and father. It's a systems view. Then there are other humans, of course, but also animals and plants. Think about a gardener who has a very personal relationship with plants that someone who isn't a gardener wouldn't have. And with spirits, ancestors, your deceased ancestors—your deceased grandfather is still your grandfather, he's your grandfather in the spirit world, and in this lifetime at least. In another lifetime he wouldn't be your grandfather but in this relationship your relationship extends before birth and after death with your family. And then deities, some of us have relationships with the Western god Jehovah, or maybe Indian Shiva or Shakti.

And relations with your physical body are very important. The basis of so much psychosomatic illness, all kinds of illnesses, is the self-concept,

self-image. “Am I too fat? Too thin? Too weak?” or any of the different things that concern us that revolve around the body, the physical body and the energy field. That’s the sense of identity, the self-system. “I’m a fat person. I’m a thin person. I’m an ugly person. I’m a beautiful person.” Then family, “I’m a family.” That’s pretty core. The group, this group of people, this psychological community, society, humanity. “I’m a human being.” What a concept! What does that imply, my identity?

We also have relations with places. Place of origin. “This is where I am from. I’m a German. I was German-born. Ich bin ein Berliner.” Actually I was, as Kennedy said, born in Berlin. I don’t live there now but it’s part of my identity. I like it; it’s a part of my identity that I like. It’s a place of origin, a place of home, a place of vision. Think about a refugee. A person who says, “Oh well everything in my home has been destroyed, my family has been killed, I have no home, I’m homeless.” What identity is this? What a terrible thing that is, and how common that is. Homeless on the streets, no place to live, “I’m on the street, a homeless person.”

Then expanding, “I’m an Earthling.” That’s your worldview, I’m part of this world, this planet, and the universe. Robbie Fuller who I like a lot, he likes to start his thinking projects with the universe and then work his way down, rather than starting with the individual. I want to start with the universe, and he said, “Universe is everything I can think of, universe is everything I can think of.” Notice how that includes all subjective, all objective. He would say, “Tell me something I haven’t included. Tell me what it is and I’ll include it.”

[audience laughs]

In a further breakdown into the process of perception and divination, if you start with the intention or interest or question, that leads to tracking and selecting focus, the narrowing, then perceiving, sensing what you attend to, then you perceive, then you have a target image that you’re looking at. Now the target image may be in the past, in which case it’s a memory; it may be in the future, a vision; or it may be a nonlocal present. People who do remote viewing research, they’re looking at something that’s not locally present in their own perceptual field. Or it may be the internal perception of a symbolic image, like if we were doing psychoanalysis, that’s the target.

Then you are relating, associating, making connections that then lead to apperception, the awareness of context. Then you're reflecting and integrating and getting answers to questions on the divination.

I have an extensive part of my writing that describes all the details of this model. There's kind of a condensation of a lot of texts in my book where I talk about bardo states of birth and death; it's a cyclical view of bardo. We've all heard about the three bardo states after death in the Tibetan Book of the Dead, which Leary and Albert and I wrote the psychedelic version of, but it wasn't originally about psychedelic experience, it was about death actually, dying and what happens after you actually die, before you get reborn. You see we used it, actually at Aldous Huxley's suggestion, as a guide to psychedelic experiences because the ways and language available to the Western mind, whether Jewish or Christian or the generic Western mind, doesn't have any language for talking about consciousness after death, but the Buddhists do. So we adopted the Buddhist language to talk about what happens after ego death, but this is a model about what happens after actual death. We have these three bardos—which you have probably all heard of—the bardo of dying; the bardo of the interlife period, the heaven and hell visions; then the bardo of rebirth, which starts with conception then leads to actual birth. It turns out in the Buddhist text about the bardos it actually talks about six bardos, not just three, and includes the bardo of the waking state, the bardo of the dreaming state, and the bardo of meditation.

That makes very clear what *bardo* means, which state of consciousness in between. It means in between one transition and another transition. The sleep state is the state between falling asleep and waking up, the drug state is between taking the drug and the drug wears off. So, in the period of time between birth and death, we go into these three bardos and we may go into various other altered states, but we regularly cycle through the bardo of the waking state, the dreaming state, and meditation state, which are profoundly different from each other. It's interesting that in the Buddhist view they don't have the sleeping state and the nonsleeping state as a separate thing, because they say you should always try to work consciously when you are sleeping and when you are dreaming, but in the Hindu tradition they have nondreaming sleep and dreaming sleep as a separate state. This is what I like as a model. If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am for myself only,

what am I? And if not now, when? So, thank you very much for your attention.

DISCUSSION OF

Entheogens, Radical Empiricism, and the Nature of Reality

David Luke: What's fascinating is this notion of intention, attention, and awareness, and how that might apply to exploring the DMT world for instance. The Imperial [college] team did this recent experiment where they injected me, or rather, lots of people with DMT, and then, every minute, they would ask this question, "How intense is your experience on a scale of one to ten?" I know you went a little bit further with that originally, with the experiential typewriter and this method of asking every minute, when somebody's in the DMT state.

Ralph Metzner: Well, the key is being conscious of your intention before you start, not afterward. Afterward is then kind of a reconstruction, you know. I found in my therapy that inevitably, whenever somebody has a bad trip, the first thing to do with them is ask, "Why did you take this trip? What were you doing? What were you trying to do? And, who were you with? What was the set and setting?" "Well I dunno, you know, I was at this party and this guy said, 'Hey, man, take this.'"

[audience laughter]

We all know that. We've all been there.

Luke: So, do you think kind of a programmed intention helps with attention and then awareness in navigating these worlds?

Metzner: Well, you can't program the intention; programming means the intention. If you program the experience that means you consciously choose what kind of experience you're going to try to have. Of course, it may not happen because other things may happen, but at least this is what I find in

working in therapy, helping people try to understand bad trips and so forth. The key thing, as in all types of therapy, is what you were trying to do before this experience happened. What were you doing, what was in your mind, what was in your heart, in your feelings, as well as in your environment, of course?

LUKE: Could you tell us any more about the experiential typewriter, with the DMT back in the 60s I believe, how effective was that?

METZNER: Well Leary wrote that up in one of his essays. That was injecting DMT. I personally don't think it was that useful. Now DMT, well there's a whole thing about DMT and 5-methoxy-DMT, but injecting DMT I don't see any point in that at all. I don't see anything positive that has ever come out of that.

LUKE: As opposed to smoking?

METZNER: Well, largely it's a dissociative. We made a terrific effort to focus on it. DMT is the main psychoactive ingredient in ayahuasca. That's a whole other thing. There's a whole tradition, a whole other morphic field of DMT and its use in there. DMT by itself, I don't think it's that interesting a substance actually, when taken as a snuff. When taken as an injection it's too scary, it's too intense. You have to be able to moderate the intensity of the experience, because people differ too. The sensitivity of various individuals varies tremendously so like 100 mg of LSD for one person might be a very intense trip, with anxiety, and for other people it might be very mild. Individual differences in sensitivity are huge. It's like when people are clairvoyant or clairsentient, that means their individual sensitivity is high, so the given drug would be a much more intense experience. I think that is actually a big factor of unrecognized bad trips. In the hippy culture everybody just says, "I'll take 500 mics [micrograms] man." In the current research they control the environment and stimuli that's being presented to the individual, because you want all the subjects to have the same experience, otherwise you can't do comparisons. But the world doesn't work that way. You don't take account of innate sensitivity by just ignoring it and giving everybody the same amount. So, thank you for asking that question. It's extremely relevant, I think.

DANIEL PINCHBECK: I thought we were going to talk about the whole entity validity question, but I was curious with all these years of thinking, what would, for you, be the cutting-edge research? Let's say you had an institute and a few million dollars and subjects and the possibility to administer psychedelics to people, what do you see as the next threshold of fascinating research with human beings in this area that would be amazing to do? To establish, maybe, scientific knowledge of divination or the different levels of consciousness. Where would you take that?

METZNER: Well I think the two most interesting and productive possibilities for research with these psychoactive psychedelic medicines are, one, in the healing of trauma, using MDMA and drugs in that class, which are not really hallucinogens and they're not psychedelics, they really deserve a different terminology. I call them empathogens [i.e., generating a state of empathy]. There's no heaven and hell, for example, there's no visuals, no kaleidoscopic anything, just getting into a very positive emotional state that accepts whatever is, and so in the treatment of trauma it's by far the best trauma treatment that's ever been discovered or invented. Now for the other psychedelics, though, I would say it would be for people in the later stages of life. The most urgent need is help in healing trauma and help in dealing with aging and death, which happens to everybody. It's a large population of people who have PTSD, but death happens like 100 percent, and 100 percent are unprepared, more or less, and scared, and that's why I think psilocybin and not MDMA would be used in preparation for dying, because MDMA makes you want to live, and you want something to help you detach, to want to start to withdraw your identity and expand your awareness into possibilities of larger perspectives. Something larger that includes death and life, the natural phases of the cycle.

PINCHBECK: So, nothing about the possibility of trying to inquire deeper into what are these other realities, or other dimensions, or what kind of rules might operate there.

METZNER: No. You asked me what do I think is the most interesting area of research, the most valuable and worthwhile to pursue, and that's what I would say. I'm a healer. I'm oriented toward healing. Using drugs to just explore consciousness, that's OK, but in terms of healing and therapy those two would be the most promising possibilities and applications, I think.

Dennis McKenna: It's interesting in therapeutic psilocybin studies of end of life, these are patients who are anxious about death, as we all are, but quite anxious, unable to deal with that, but the therapeutic outcome for the psilocybin was the realization of, "Well I'm going to die, but I'm alive now so enjoy that." So it almost says it's useless to speculate what happens when you die, so it's not the outcome you'd expect; it's, "Be conscious of your living the life now."

Metzner: Yes, and that happens to be the mystic teaching of all ages. It just so happens that that's why they did death-rebirth ritual, so you'd think ahead. There's a wonderful story that was published about one of the first people in this research. This woman related what happened when she was given psilocybin as part of Charlie Grob's project. She had cancer, she had diagnosis, she was going to die in six months, or something like that. She was given psilocybin with no prior experience, and she described, she was sitting there and her mind was going through all the usual things—what's it going to be like, and what about my husband, I'm worried about the pain and my children—and she experienced how all those worries, and fear connected to the worries, sort of congealed. She described it as if it was a congealed mass in the center of her chest, and then it dissolved.

And she said, "Yeah I'm going to be dying, and I love my husband now, and I love what I do now, and I'm going to focus on that and I'm not denying anything. I'm going to focus on that." And she just released that clutching in her and it just dissolved and she was free. And it relates to her experience. She spent her remaining months happy, she took up gardening, she took up some mild exercise, she spent more time with her husband and her children and, I don't know, I wasn't there, but she died and what a gift that would be, what a gift and how necessary and how unavailable. That's why I think any of the studies that can integrate the psychedelic experience into hospice and preparation for dying, and the legal changes that are letting people decide on what kind of conditions they want to be dying under, are necessary.

What a horrible thing that is to have the law and the medical system tell you what kind of care you can have or not have. People should be able to make a living world where you can decide how you want your parting, legal and certified, so your family can have the method of combatting that system, so you can die how you want. This was beautiful. One of the most

positive cultural movements happening at the present time, in a time when there's a lot of really horrible stuff going on, but that's a really conscious dying, and intentionally being able to choose the manner and way you die, it's beautiful.

CHAPTER 4

Subjective Experiences and Sensed Presence Phenomenon in Human Research with DMT

Chris Timmermann

I've been doing a project at Imperial College London, primarily on the effects that DMT has on the human brain. We are using these substances to understand what are the neural mechanisms of altered states of consciousness, and we're trying to bridge that with actual lived experience. In building these bridges, I think we can advance the field of psychedelic research, the field of neuroscience and consciousness research, more generally, and we're starting to see some interesting results in that regard—in how psychedelic science can actually help us advance this very fussy and difficult terrain that is consciousness research. It's really a unique opportunity.

The other area we are exploring a lot is how can we also use these substances in a therapeutic way. How can we use them to help alleviate depression, for example? But this talk is primarily going to be about the sensed presence phenomenon that we're seeing in the DMT study. Outside the scientific context these reports are very noticeable, in the sense that a lot

of people mention these sensed presence experiences, which I think is one of the main reasons why you are doing this symposium, Anton.

So, I'm just going to present this from the science point of view, the data we've been collecting regarding the sensed presence phenomenon and how this is inserted into the constellation of effects that DMT usually gives. I think the sensed presence phenomenon is not an isolated phenomenon; it exists within the whole experience provided by the drug. So, I will go into the subjective experience induced by DMT as a whole and how this sensed presence phenomenon fits into that. I am also going to present some results from some brain data, because I guess there's some interest in that as well, and how we can use that to inform or maybe locate where the neural correlates of the sensed presence phenomenon are. Therefore another part of this is, What is happening in the brain when these encounters occur?

I'd like to begin by making a case for the short-acting psychedelic drugs. When we usually do research with any sort of long-lasting psychedelic like LSD or psilocybin, we get a strong transition of conscious experience, which is a long journey, so capturing the different states and the nuances, the specifics that go on into this in terms of brain activity, in terms of experience, it's not that straightforward or easy. There are many levels to the experience and many complexities, but when you give a drug like DMT, you are condensing that very intense experience, with its own particularities of course, and you have this unique opportunity to map out each of these transitions of consciousness, and there appears to be a sort of order in the experience itself. There's a sequence of events, and there are things that happen before and things that happen after. Also, there's a nice transition that's going on. Using a tool such as DMT we are potentially able to map out, quite precisely, in which part of this sequence does the entity phenomenon occur, and what is going on in the brain at that point in time, so we are aiming to generate a marriage between brain data and experience.

I'll just give a bit of a background of what has been popping out in human research with DMT. I know there's been a lot of data collected on DMT experiences from use outside of research environments, but we'll just stick to the research environments because they provide controlled conditions.

Stephen Szára was the first person to discover the effects of pure DMT when he administered it on himself, and he gave it to healthy participants,

usually colleagues of his. He described the subjective effects very broadly, but he focused on visual and auditory imagery, disturbances of space perception, and of the body schema, which are quite interesting. But when looking at those reports, we see that there's more nuance to the actual visual effects, which are more pronounced compared to other psychedelics. In terms of sensed presence experiences some quotes from his participants were, "The room is full of spirits," "I have arrived. In front of me are two quiet, sunlit Gods. They gaze at me and nod in a friendly manner. I think they are welcoming me into this new world. This is Egypt, what wonder, these are the sons of the Sun, and I am finally at home." And then, "I saw strange creatures, dwarfs or something, they were black and moved about."

So, this is quite special. We are not only seeing entities popping up but specific characteristics that color these encounters. For example, the feeling of being at home, the welcoming spirit of it all, as well as descriptions of dwarves and elves. This is quite interesting because when these experiments took place is a time when people didn't know much about DMT, they actually practically didn't know anything at all, and certainly Szára's participants didn't. So, the influence of the cultural set and setting is not there; nevertheless, you see these recurrent characteristics popping out.

The second big researcher on human experiences with DMT was Rick Strassman, who studied the subjective effects in great detail. The main effects that he characterizes consist of an intense rush at the onset, marked visual imagery (as you would expect), and losing bodily awareness, which I think is hugely interesting in the context of consciousness research. He also mentioned that thinking and the sense of self or ego are generally preserved under these states, and this appears to set it apart quite significantly from what you would expect from longer-acting psychedelic drugs like LSD or psilocybin. These are some interesting characteristics that possibly speak about the specificity of the effects of DMT.

In term of entities there seems to be quite a sequential character to the reported encounters; the encounter is preceded by a strong vibration, accumulation of sound, and suddenly this breakthrough into this place where the encounter actually takes place. The environment in which the encounter takes place appears to be very researchlike, very technological, and for Strassman's experiments you could argue that these descriptions were influenced heavily by the fact that these experiences were in fact

taking place in a research environment with a lot of equipment around. That being said, a lot of the technical equipment and the alien nature of the experience also appears to be frequently reported outside of the context of lab-based human research.

In terms of communication, the greetings of the beings and the fact they were expecting participants was also something that was quite common in these experiments. What I think is also interesting is the fact there appears to be a purpose, an intelligence, an intention behind the entity encounters, so they are not just playing with objects that are anthropomorphic, but there's a sense of "otherness" going around, marked by this idea that there's intention, there's purpose. Theory of mind, as Michael [Winkelman] mentioned yesterday, would be a good way to put a cognitive psychology construct into this idea of intention or purpose. Also, these subjectively felt encounters are marked by an emotional tone in many cases, both positive and negative, such as joy, calmness, peace, et cetera. Additionally, there is even some psychotherapeutic insight if you read some of the reports, but it has a spiritual tone, such as giving advice about the future of mankind, and these elements are also part of the specific characteristics of these encounters, which make them extremely fascinating.

To give some examples from Strassman's study: "They were aware of me, but not particularly concerned. It was like what a parent would feel looking into a playpen at his one-year-old laying there." I'm focusing on this because we actually see in the narratives from our studies this idea of a playpen as well, it's quite a striking similarity. "The elves were prankish and ornery in their nature, it was their territory. They held up placards, showing me all this incredibly beautiful, complex, swirling geometric stuff. They wanted me to look!" So, the feelings of intention and purpose are there. To participants, it feels like they have an agenda and the participants are walking into a different neighborhood of sorts. It's not like the entities are visiting them, it's like they are visiting the entities.

Going back a bit, you can describe the effects of DMT as generating somatic effects and strong visual imagery. There's this very common experience of sensing presences and accessing new realities. Places that give a really strong sense of otherness, both in the sense of presence and in the space itself, so the panoramic perspective on subjective effects is that we have a drug that induces strong and dynamic shifts in experience, and

what we want to do is see what happens in the brain. What we didn't know at the beginning of the studies, however, was, Can we give this drug inside an MRI scanner? We know when you give DMT intravenously at the higher dose range it can induce strong anxiety, so we wanted to check what is the right dose and how can we really go about this in a safe way.

If it's possible to map the effects of DMT in the brain with a proper temporal and spatial resolution, can we actually figure out what's happening in the brain and in the experience in the right moment? With the right precision? And finally, can we map some of the elements of the DMT experience? Can we actually map the subjectively felt entity encounters? Can we map this breakthrough into this different space, this different place? Can we actually see how realities are being built in terms of brain activity? Not only that, but can we actually map these experiential transitions? And can we map this initial geometrical phase into this breakthrough DMT phase? And can we map this initial encounter, et cetera?

To do that we split our research into two main stages. The first one corresponded to a dose-finding study of DMT, in which we administered different doses of DMT to different people in a safe environment using EEG (a noninvasive neuroimaging technique), which we've now finished. In the second phase, which we haven't begun yet, we want to actually map the effects of DMT in terms of brain activity but using both EEG and fMRI scanning. So, we're using advanced neuroimaging techniques that allow us to understand when things are happening in the brain with the right temporal precision provided by EEG to get rhythmic patterns in the brain. These rhythmic patterns allow us to map certain states of consciousness, whereas fMRI allows us to understand *where* are things happening in the brain, what is the precise location where these experiences can be mapped, and what are the neural circuits that are modulated by DMT administration.

As already mentioned, it's initially about safety and the trade-off between safety and getting the right psychological effects. We wanted to get subjectively felt entity encounters, we wanted to get the feelings of breakthrough into a different place, but we wanted it to be safe at the same time. We needed to strike the right balance between those two elements and I think we did, and in the end all of this has to be feasible to do in a neuroimaging environment. What we did was we gave intravenous doses of

DMT fumarate, the same sort of dosage as Rick Strassman, who helped us a lot in terms of giving us advice on how to prepare the drug.

First, we gave some participants 7 mg of DMT and placebo on separate days, which is considered a lowish dose of intravenous (IV) DMT. Once we assessed it was safe—but we felt the effects were not really the ones we were after—we increased to 14 mg, which is considered a medium psychedelic dose by Rick Strassman. We saw it was safe, but still we were not getting reliable experiences of breaking through. So, then we increased up to 20 mg and saw it was safe and people were actually getting to that place. They were having encounters and the experiences that we were actually wanting to get at. This was the same dose that Rick saw was preferable in his studies with his subjects.

So we did this for thirteen people, and the room where the dosing took place was a very medical environment, but knowing about set and setting and the mediation by these nonpharmacological factors in the experience—state of mind, disposition, personality, but also your appreciation of the context is fundamental—we covered up all the medical stuff, we put nice mood lights on, and made a relaxed environment. We then set up the EEG equipment, and we helped people ease into the experience as much as possible. We did some relaxation exercises, some body scans so that people could really relax. A lot of participants really appreciated this, and it seemed to be very helpful for them.

We then administered DMT and the effects came on quite strong and quite fast. We asked for intensity ratings from zero to ten on each minute after the administration was given so we could get a nice time course of the effects. So when participants gave a zero, it corresponded to no drug effects and ten corresponded to the most intense possible effects imaginable. Usually, we saw very strong effects right after the IV shot, as you would expect, and within seven to ten minutes the effects have subsided quite strongly, and then back to baseline.

Once the experience was over, we asked what happened with interviews and all of the usual questionnaires our team uses in research with psychedelics. When using these validated questionnaires we found that the most prominent effects, as you would expect, were high scores for the elementary and complex imagery scales—meaning they gave high scores for experiences of seeing geometric patterns, and also entity encounters,

places, colors, shapes, movement, et cetera; that was very prominent. The other effect prominently captured by these questionnaires was the effects in the body, the sense of changes in embodied experience while also losing body awareness. Finally we also saw effects in spiritual-type experiences that were quite strongly scored, which was relatively surprising for us. We weren't expecting people to have a positive emotional reaction necessarily, but it's something that actually showed up quite frequently, and I think the influence of set and setting and the fact we chose participants that were very healthy both mentally and physically might have something to do with this.

Also, somewhat surprisingly we found that scales of anxiety and audiovisual synesthesia, when corrected for multiple comparisons, weren't that prominently changed, so even though their anxiety is present it's not hugely present, which was quite a big surprise, and quite a nice thing to see that we can give relatively high doses in a safe way in this research. And when you compare the different doses, you see very similar patterns with different degrees of intensity. The problem is that we had such a small sample size—it was just thirteen people—we weren't able to do comparisons between doses. Only three people got 7 mg, four got 14, and only six got high doses, so we can't really do systematic comparisons between the doses to actually say what's more prominent in this dose and what's more prominent in that dose. Nevertheless, you get an idea of what is going on in terms of subjective experience.

Now when you look at the specific items that we asked about, geometrical patterns, the sense of size or space being altered, elaborate imagery, these were also quite prominent. Also, what we wanted to find out —experiencing a different reality or dimension and the sensed presence phenomenon, the entity experience—was very pronounced after DMT was administered.

This is all nice and well in terms of numbers, but it tells us little about lived experience and what are the nuances behind the experience, so we did interviews right after the effects subsided, which were approximately thirty minutes long and consisted of open and closed questions. Initially we asked, What was the experience about? And then after that we focused on specific items that we were interested in, hypotheses that we know or think we know that are closely related to the DMT experience. Then we did thematic analysis and clustered all the data into the most prominent themes. This is

just a first-pass analysis on the data—we did it this week with a colleague—but nevertheless I think it provides a panoramic view in terms of the landscape of the experience.

In terms of bodily effects, the most prominent themes that came out were a sense of rush, vibration, warmth, and also increased body-mind connection. This divide between what is felt in the body and what is felt in the mind became much, much less differentiated. We also saw distorted perception or awareness of one's own body, with feelings of limbs growing longer, feelings of expansion, feelings of being stretched-out were also prominent effects. We also saw some dissolution of bodily boundaries, which is quite interesting. In the reports, participants didn't report that their ego dissolved in terms of an autobiographical sense of self being dissolved. In the case of DMT this thing doesn't appear to be the question, as the reports are more consistent with an *embodied* self that actually is dissolved. The reports in fact mention this kind of bodily expansion that goes beyond the subject-object distinction. Also there are reports of intense feelings of pleasure in the body, which is also a theme that came up, people actually enjoying bodily sensations and having nice sensations.

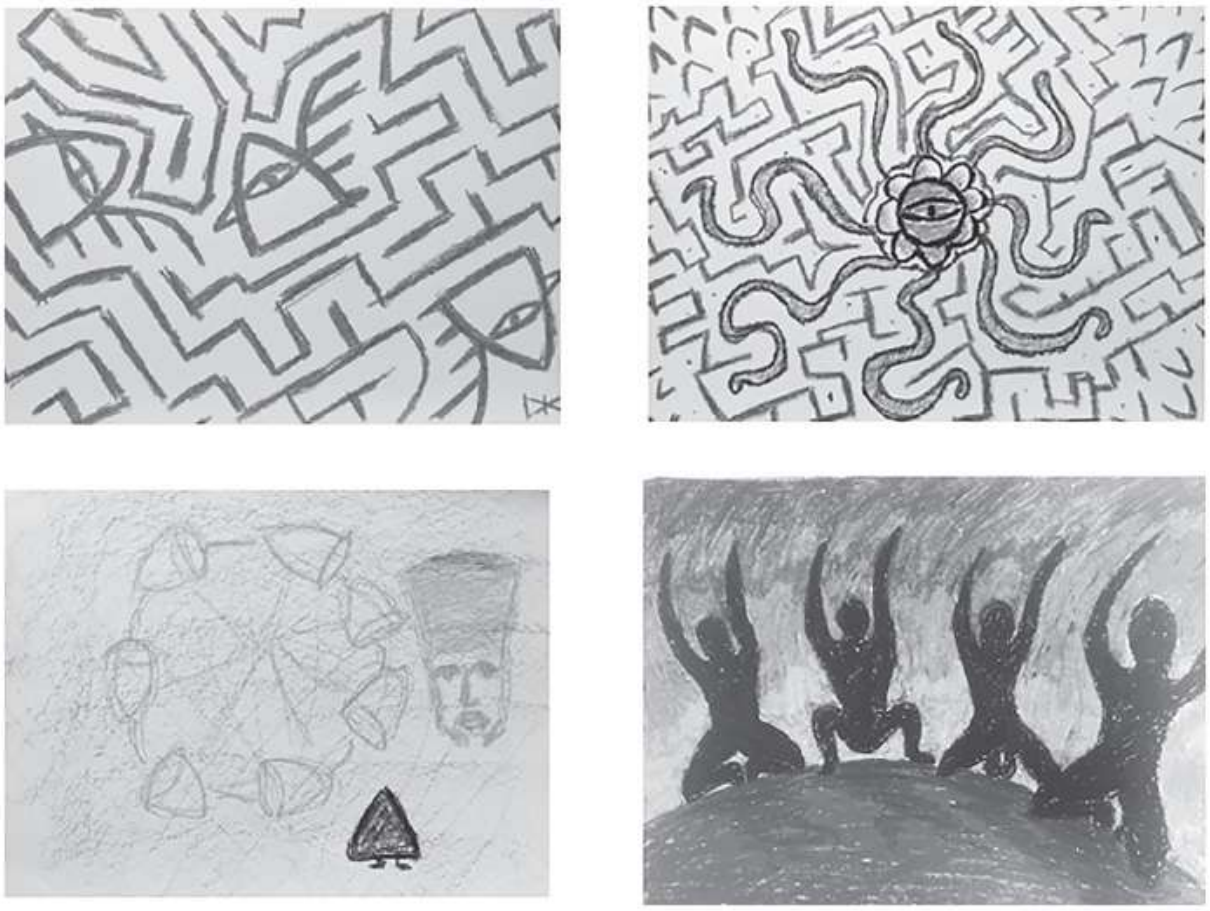
To give some quotes, "It was almost like a sort of G-force, it just knocked me back in the seat," and I have to say the machinery analogy was quite prominent, in terms of the rush, with many people using words such as *overpowering* effects, *machinery* effects, stuff like that. "It came on very quickly and felt very strong in the body. It felt like I *was* the geometry. It felt like my body was informing me about the geometry as well." These are quite nice examples of how it appears that the body opens up into the visual part of the experience; the body kind of informs the visual space when the onset of the effects starts occurring.

We also made participants draw sketches when the effects were over. In terms of simple visual imagery in the sketches, geometrical patterns were prominently featured. *Everybody* saw geometrical patterns, and most of the people mentioned spontaneously how colorful they were and the fact that they had a kinetic quality. Descriptions mention that patterns were moving quite a lot; they weren't static images.

To give some examples, we saw drawings depicting lattices, eyes, Escherlike birds, and attempts to depict experiences of a multidimensional space and things of that sort. Other sketches also displayed similarity to

Shipibo artwork and, at higher doses, the geometrical imagery being in movement, becoming much more kinetic, with a lot of color and very vivid. Complex imagery is another main theme that popped up, and we saw a lot of references to familiar objects or objects that people knew about, like little statue figurines that somebody had seen on the street that morning or being in a library with monkeys because they were telling their son a story about monkeys that morning and things of the sort. Also objects that convey a lot of meaning for people and a high level of detail; for example, reports mention perceiving an eye with tentacles, which had a strong sense of intention. In another example, there are depictions of Fabergé eggs, and a lot of detailed information within the eggs that was described as cosmic, as providing a lot of meaning, with a spiritual significance to it.

As we go deeper and deeper into the experience, people reported a sense of being transported, and the subthemes within this main theme were feelings of being transported into a different space, feelings that the space had an otherworldly quality to it, feelings that the space had an enhanced sense of reality, that it was a familiar place, and that the experience of transportation also had this feeling of floating. To give some examples, “I had this sense of jumping into another dimension. It was very geometric. Basically, almost like a launch pad. It felt entirely like this other world, from which I am also a part”—conveying the idea that the sense of self is constituting this other world.



Sketches by participants undergoing the DMT experiment.
(Timmermann et al., 2019)

Another big cluster of themes was receiving external information, the idea you are learning through the experience and that the learning is provided by this experience of this other world. For example, “Everything you could ever possibly see is right in front of you” and “I understood time,” one participant said, while another stated, “I was being shown the interconnectedness and there was a sense of having to try and pay attention. It was as if a presence or something was trying to make me pay attention to lessons or things that were happening so that I could remember them. And a lot of it seemed to be about compassion, gratitude, empathy, and kindness. It felt, I suppose, transcendent in that realm that it was very much as if I was a child back in church being reminded the important lessons.” This is a very nice example of somebody actually being shown stuff by some sort of entity that has some sort of psychological, emotional, or even spiritual

significance. And here is another example—also mentioned before—of somebody receiving external information: in this case the participant felt as if he was traveling into these Fabergé eggs and inside the Fabergé eggs were galaxies. In this example an incredible amount of information was felt as completely overwhelming, so again we have this idea that participants are getting into a space that has knowledge that the person mentions was novel to them, which is quite fascinating.

Usual words related to emotional reactions that came up were *humility, love, spiritual, excitement, inspiration, gratitude, peaceful, acceptance, openness, contentment,* and even the catchword of last year, *hygge,* which is this Danish word for hominess or a comfort kind of feeling. Other reactions that came up were anxiety and fear by some participants. It wasn't excessively pronounced, we didn't have any sort of adverse reaction, but anxiety was present for some in the experience, of course, as you would expect, otherwise it wouldn't be a proper highdose DMT experience.

Interestingly, in the sensed presence or entity phenomena theme, the main subthemes that we found in the interviews were the feelings that the being was intentful; there was intention behind the encounters, there seemed to be a sense of purpose, and this was the most prominent thing that came up. The fact the encounter was devoid of imagery was also relatively present. Feelings that the encounter was personally relevant were also mentioned, that it held a significance for the person. Another subtheme we found was that some entities have this indeterminate vagueness quality. Finally, a subtheme that came up in lower doses involved also the effects of the body—people having the sense that the presence interacted with their bodies in some sort of way, some sort of tactile feeling related to it.

In the dose of medium intensity (14 mg), this is where entity encounters are not so evident but there's some display of these characteristics popping up, as in this report: "I saw two figures. There was a figure in human shape and then a little cartoonlike figure and it was bluish purple. The human was almost like Cleopatra. They were like a team." So you start seeing that there's some sort of social interaction between the presences; they are not just isolated figures, there's some sort of whole felt social dimension going on there. Also, in the mid dose there is another example: "It was like traveling toward an eye, but a very benign eye, like some sort of bubble eye with geometric action going on. I had this brief sense of being drawn

toward it and being quite conscious. It felt challenging, but at the same time it felt like a quite comfortable loss of control, kind of giving yourself over to something else." I think this is an interesting example in which there's not a very obvious sense of presence but some of the characteristics are very much popping up. For example, the fact the presence is benign, or the eye has some sort of intention behind it, it's not evil, its actually benign, and the participant felt drawn toward it, to something else, something out there, and the fact it's quite conscious. The attribution of consciousness, or sentience, is given to this entity.

But in the high dose (20 mg) we saw much more evident this sensed presence: "I was then being shown a blackboard, and there are these sort of entities saying 'Have a look at this.' It's like a playpen where I'm being watched." And this is very much what Stephen Szára reported in his initial study. The same participant reports, "I also see hieroglyphic language very much in the center of my vision." So, you've got communication going on, nonverbal communication, but these hieroglyphics, the person can't really describe what they are, but he feels that there's a transfer of information going on, and the fact the entities want to show something to the participant implies that they're feeling some sort of information being transmitted.

Finally, we have an example of a participant mentioning she had two encounters with entities. In the first one there was this negative reaction that was very similar to what is seen in near-death experiences (NDEs): "There were beings that wouldn't allow me to trespass. Putting a lot of pressure for me to stay on this side . . ." so very much like NDEs. And then she had a second entity encounter on the second part of the experience: "There were shadows of presences taking care of me as if I'd had an accident. Moving at great speed around me and chanting, waving their hands. They were putting their hands on me, as if they were healing me." This is quite a nice display of psychological tension of the first encounter manifested by this anxiety or pressure, with the entities being a bit aggressive toward her and then this reparation from these other beings by healing her, so quite a strong sensed presence report here.

We also saw that many of these felt encounters were devoid of imagery: "I started to feel a presence in the room. The feeling, an arm or some kind of limb that was projecting from somewhere over there toward me." So just feeling some sort of presence without actually seeing one. And, "I didn't get

any kind of actual precepts of these presences just kind of, a sense. It definitely felt like encounters with kind of a sentient other but no, nothing visible as such." So that's another interesting characteristic.

So we also use some validated questionnaires on entity phenomena and we saw the two main themes that were significant in the entity encounters were very plainly reported, "I sensed the presence of another being or beings" and "I sensed like I was being watched over by a caring being or beings," which shows a positive side to the thing. When you look at the different doses you see that, in higher doses, the entity phenomena is quite high whereas between the low and the mid, for some reason, we saw less entity phenomena in the mid dose, when you look at this scale at least. Then again with such a small sample size, it's difficult to draw precise inferences between doses.

We also gave them the NDEs scale questionnaire, and we saw that it was highly significant compared to placebo. Bruce Greyson, who developed it, says we usually consider a total score of seven to be a cutoff for having a NDE whereas a score of fifteen would be like a completely full-blown NDE, and our participants scored just below fifteen on average. Now, none of the participants said, "I had a NDE," and exploring the similarities and details in the phenomenology, looking at the experience as a whole, it's not the same thing that emerged under DMT. A different lived experience is what happens, but one that shares some similarities with NDEs. When you look at doses you also see this dose relationship but it's not so clear cut.

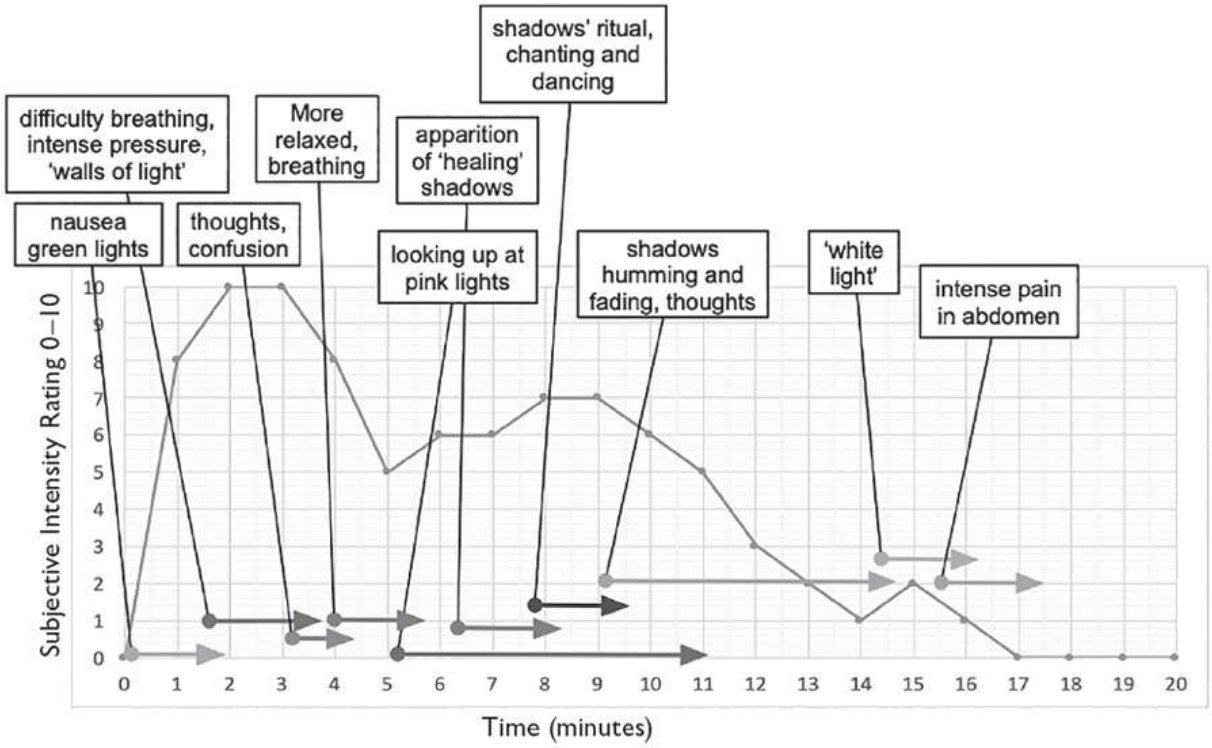
In terms of mystical-type experiences—we see the main five clusters that have been identified in some of the most recent research on the questionnaires—they all emerge massively on DMT. So, the mystical or noetic quality of the experience—the feeling of truth, the elevated positive mood, transcending time and space, and the sense of ineffability, that the experience is not that easy to put in the words—was highly significant.

In terms of brain-activity measures with EEG, we know that in normal resting conditions the alpha band is the most prominent rhythm of synchronized activity that we know of in the brain, and in terms of rhythmic patterns, these correspond to synchronized activity, which is very prominent when people have their eyes closed. This is how people were before receiving the drug, wearing eyeshades with eyes closed. We found that the alpha band was massively reduced after the administration of DMT

compared to placebo, and this fits quite well with what has been seen in ayahuasca research, not only ayahuasca research, but also ayahuasca research that has looked at what is the specific contribution of DMT in terms of brain activity. There's also a strong relationship between reductions in alpha frequencies and DMT, and the blocking of the serotonin 2A receptor, the main receptor linked to psychedelic activity. And our results are quite consistent with this.

So, this is interesting but it doesn't tell us about the dynamics of the experience. It doesn't really tell us about how the experience is unfolding moment by moment. To explore this, we collected intensity ratings from zero to ten of the experience every minute, and we saw a nice dose relationship between intensity and dose. We also used these intensity ratings in a creative fashion to do a microphenomenological interview to see what was going on in the experience and also try to capture specifically where the entity phenomena was occurring within the experience itself. So a second interview was done by a collaborator from the University of Oxford, Raphaël Millière, in which he used these temporal anchors related to the intensity of the experience to remind people what was happening at that moment so that people could tell us in detail what was their lived experience. So, we could have said for example, "Well when you gave us a rating of eight at the first minute what was going on?" and the participant would say, "Well at that stage I was having a bit of nausea, I was seeing green lights." And then, "What happened," you would ask, "when you gave us an intensity rating of ten?" And the participant would say, "Well yes, I started to have difficulty breathing, there was intense pressure, I started seeing balls of lights," and so on.

So this is a disciplined way to get a nice temporal resolution of what the experience is about and how it unfolds. As you can see in the progression of effects, in one example, you can locate the entity experience at this point at minute five, where you get the apparition of human shadows. The entity encounter is being mapped out in a nice fashion during the experience, so in another example we have aliens popping up at minute three, and you get a detailed description of what was going on precisely. And then another participant had goblins popping up quite early on in the experience between minute zero and minute one. Finally, one had the Indian Hindu goddess Kali popping up at minute four.



Microphenomenological interview example of the DMT experience. Credit: Raphaël Millière.

What's nice about this is not only do we have the opportunity of looking at when the entity phenomena is occurring precisely in the experience itself, but we can then relate this temporal resolution with what we are seeing in the brain. For example, in one participant we can see the synchronized alpha activity popping up quite strongly and quite fast, and then recovering slowly as the experience went on. And when you actually put the intensity ratings on top of this and do some statistical analysis you can see that there's a strong relationship between the intensity ratings and alpha waves. Then, with the microphenomenological interviews we have a dynamic way of measuring this as the experience is unfolding and of seeing what is happening in the brain minute by minute. What we hope to do with this is actually relate the entity encounter or specific aspects of the experience to specific brain activity in the fMRI study. It's a novel way of approaching brain imaging and experience and bridging the two together in the best possible way.

In terms of what we saw in the microphenomenological analysis we divided the experience into stages. I know there's a lot about the stages of the experience already out there [in the literature], but we used this in a controlled fashion in a research environment with controlled doses. What we saw is that there appears to be this initial stage where there's the rush, the vibration, then there's the simple imagery phase, the loss of bodily awareness, and the body opening up into the experience, and then the complex imagery phase, arriving at a place or rooms filled with objects or entities. And finally the ending phase of regaining bodily awareness, with strange feelings of the body, strange perception of the limbs stretching, stuff like that.

To give a bit of a summary, we see the dynamic effects of the experience involving many sensory modalities and having a sequential fashion. There's a dynamic—there appears to be stages, an order within participants—and also between participants at the macro level you can see some consistencies. DMT generated reliable entity phenomena at high doses. The most prominent features in the entity phenomena that popped up were feelings of intentions, purpose, and communication and reductions in the alpha and the beta bands, and we were able to map some of these subjective effects into brain data.

In terms of what are the limitations, we can't really speak much about what are the differences between doses because we didn't have so many people getting different doses. There might be a limiting effect of asking for intensity ratings, as participants mention that it felt like they were being brought back from the DMT space into this reality space when they were giving these ratings. This is something that I also read about in Leary's experiential typewriter article—this idea of being pulled back and not being able to have a full immersion in the experience. And finally, there might be limitations regarding the specificity of subjective effects, as most of the participants, if not all, had previous experience of DMT. So while this made them experts in describing their experiences, it was difficult for us to say how much there is influence of previous experiences into the current one, and this is a potential problem if you want to study the experiences as naked as possible. But it's a bit inevitable, especially in this day and age, I mean, information is everywhere. If you are going to participate in a DMT study, you are going to research about it, you are going to find out what it's all about, regardless of whether or not you are experienced.

What we want to do in the future is to actually study neural signatures that can help us identify aspects of the activity that are related to the specifics of the DMT experience, such as entity encounters, reports of how the body opens up to this geometrical space, and localizing neural signatures associated with specific cognitive phenomena, very much in the line of what Michael [Winkelman] spoke about yesterday. Also we want to find ways to map out these different facets of what we are seeing popping up in the lived experience that are related to the entity phenomena. Once we develop these neural signatures per person, we then may be able to see what the experience is about. With this approach hopefully we will see what the brain data tells us about the experience, which would enable us to try to map out these entity encounters in the brain or other interesting aspects of the experience.

And this is very much in line with what I think is one of the great research programs in neuroscience, which was developed by Francisco Varela: neurophenomenology. The basic idea about neurophenomenology is that you have brain data and you have subjective experience. You want to study consciousness, but consciousness is difficult to study because subjective experience is not easily reported, whereas brain data doesn't necessarily tell us anything about the experience itself. So how we approach this problem is we apply mutual constraints: brain activity will inform us on experience and experience will inform us on brain activity, and if we apply these mutual constraints we can get a much more adequate and detailed view on what the experience is about and what can we learn about the brain. And with that I'll just wrap it up here. Thanks very much.

DISCUSSION OF

Subjective Experiences and Sensed Presence Phenomenon in Human Research with DMT

MICHAEL WINKELMAN: I have three interrelated questions. One is you talked about alpha power. Can you explain a little bit about that in terms of what's power versus coherence versus the relative preponderance of different ranges? Secondly, you said that alpha and beta were reduced in the

brain, but your diagram talked about the occipital lobe, so was it just the occipital or the whole brain? And thirdly, if it's not too much at all, these reductions in alpha and beta don't necessarily imply that delta, theta, and/or gamma were increased.

Chris Timmermann: In the analysis we are actually starting to see some associations between theta and delta and the intensity of the experience. High frequencies like gamma, I'm not so sure about in psychedelic studies especially in serotonergic psychedelic drugs because there's a lot of muscle activity going on. We are seeing effects most prominently in alpha, a little effect in beta, but alpha is the main one. We saw the effects all over the scalp. I showed a representation of the occipital sensors as it was easier to show that representation, but we marked effects on occipital areas, and it's something that we've seen with the other psychedelics as well, very much related to imagery. In terms of what alpha power means, it means the amplitude. You have oscillations in the brain, and these are sign waves, and power is how pronounced this is in the vertical axis, and this is related to how strongly or synchronized patches of neurons are acting in the brain. What you are seeing here, in a vague way, is that you've got desynchronization, where synchronic activity of these patches of brain activity are becoming desynchronized, less predictable, less stable. Coherence is much more about phase and how the actual curves of the wave between sensors are working at the same time. We haven't looked at coherence or connectivity measures yet; it's just like plain power analysis so far.

Ede Frecska: In neuroimaging studies on meditation they prefer to use experienced Buddhist monks, so in your studies of entity encounters do you plan to study those experienced in entity encounters? I am thinking about initiated shamans. This is their job, you know, to get into contact with entities. This is what they do in meditation research. They wouldn't use just experienced DMT users as they are far less experienced than initiated shamans. During initiation, something happens within the brain that totally changes perception. Shamans are called seers in many cultures.

Timmermann: I think that is a very interesting proposition. I haven't thought about it that way. I knew about the parallels between meditation, so

I thought about psychonauts, it was the initial idea, but yeah, shamans in terms of entity encounters.

Frecscka: The point is if you want to dig deeper into entity phenomena, you must turn to those who are the experts. Because you can get very important, relevant information.

Timmermann: It is very useful, yeah, I wonder if shamans are willing to get DMT infusions though, I mean . . .

Frecscka: I could find some who are.

Timmermann: Yeah, you know some? [laughs] OK cool, yeah, then we should speak about that.

David Luke: Just going with one of the specific encounters that I really resonated with, was the one who initially saw this kind of Shipibo pattern with eyes and then it later turned into this eye with these tentacles, which has a lot of resonance with my own experience and some research I did looking into this particular entity encounter experience of that thing with the eyes and the tentacles, which crops up a lot. I mean, it's not unique to that one person; I've had that experience. I did a lot of searching around and found lots of other people had had these encounters as well, but there's something very specific here. Often there are tentacles or snakes, usually covered in lots of eyes, and in your participant there was initially lots of eyes that then became one eye. But there was something else about the actual description of the experience, they talked about being happy to give over control and feeling comfortable giving control to this thing, even though it was challenging. Because in a lot of the encounters people talked about was that this thing was hypnotizing them or kind of mesmerizing them and getting hold of their awareness and just absorbing it, so that's an interesting little twist to that.

Timmermann: Many elements that you're saying are very, very similar, I think it's quite striking.

Luke: It brings us back a bit to Michael's [Winkelman] idea, that we need a better mapping of the phenomenology, exploring the flora and fauna of the

DMT realm in a kind of anthropological and botanical way. We are yet to do that, but it's interesting in the twelve subjects you do have, one of my classic entities pops up and is behaving in a way that is somewhat predictable. Usually it's quite terrifying, although this was a medium dose and they said it was "challenging," so maybe if it was 20 mg it's going to ramp up the challenge factor.

TIMMERMANN: Absolutely, that's quite interesting.

BERNARD CARR: I noticed in your graph of intensity versus time, obviously the bigger the dose the bigger intensity, but I noticed it seemed to last longer when you had the smaller dosage. Is that a normal feature of this?

TIMMERMANN: That's a quite interesting one. I also noticed it when we first looked at the results. There are two things that may be going on here. First, it may be noise of a small sample size. It's hard to draw inferences about the general population from it, but secondly if we take this as evidence you can say that there's actual longer-lasting nice effects going on, like pleasant effects in the body, that remain, that are more prominent at lower doses. And the second explanation is that there is a bias and that bias is being drawn out by the intensity of activity at the first five minutes. It's so strong that when this drops out and you break out of the place, everything else in comparison is going to be zero or one, like no rating scale is an island, sort of.

CARR: It's just a self-reporting of the intensity?

TIMMERMANN: All of the psychological measures that we are using are self-reported measures. The scales are developed to try to make them objective by using large population samples in which you give the self-report measures.

CARR: It was an interesting discovery yesterday afternoon in Luis's talk about how apparently you need a smaller dose to have the same effect as time goes on. I wondered if that related to this in any way.

TIMMERMANN: Oh, the reverse tolerance thing, yeah. I don't know actually. I'm not quite sure. Reverse tolerance with DMT? I've heard, actually,

opposite cases with DMT, but it's hard to tell.

VIMAL DARPAN: Is there any reason why you limited your dosage to 20 mg at the maximum level? Because in my experience the most interesting effects of DMT happen around the 40 to 50 even up to 70 mg range and, as you indicated earlier, Stephen Szára had been reporting from a 70 mg range. And in my experience if you have too little of the DMT it's like taking a rocket ship that doesn't quite have enough fuel, that doesn't quite break out of the stratosphere and you come down, but if you break through you have full entity contact. Prior to that you are in what we call the garden, which is more geometric, moving, shifting, sensing presences but not having full contact with these presences.

TIMMERMANN: If you do it intramuscularly you go through a whole different set of processes where the molecule is being broken up in the body. When you give it intravenously you need much smaller doses. What we are using here is what Strassman used in his experiments, and there were definitely breakthrough experiences. We used the second highest dose Strassman used. As you can see in the intensity ratings this was pretty intense, and we saw no reason for going further into it, being that one of the main objectives of this was to take this to brain imaging. That being said, it would have been great going to 28 mg and seeing these actual super full-blown entity encounters, but I think that there's proper entity encounters here, you know, clear strong effects.

CHRIS BACHE: Just let me check to make sure I'm understanding one piece of info you presented around the entity encounters. It looked like most people reported an entity encounter when they were coming back down off their peak experience, with one exception, but it looked like it was taking place, what, at around levels five or six of intensity rather than nine or so, is that correct?

TIMMERMANN: I haven't looked in the temporal dynamics of it yet. I just showed a couple of examples.

BACHE: In terms of interpreting the relationship between the state of neurological excitation and the experience of entity encounters, I'm just wondering, as we map, it would be interesting to know if these take place at

the down curve or if they take place at the top plateau, because it might influence our subtle interpretation as we go into it.

TIMMERMANN: I think it's an interesting question. I still need to look at the temporal dynamics of the thing. So far, we have this thematic analysis going on, we have the data, but I haven't had actual time to seeb if it's something reliable occurring at specific minutes. I think there are individual differences in this. I don't think it's clear cut.

BACHE: The last few minutes of your presentation were, to me, the pithiest in terms of cosmological implications. When you are looking at the correlations you are showing correlations between degrees of neurological arousal and subjective experience. So, we have a correlation, but then the task comes of the interpretation of the correlation. Of course, the tendency is toward classical physicalist explanations that the brain is producing the experience, and so therefore we have a correlation that generates into a causation. But if we shift into a more complex potential cosmology of an interactionist vision, well then we have a correlation that might flow in both ways, and so I'm wondering what you are thinking about, at this stage in your research, before you get into the more detailed brain perspective?

TIMMERMANN: Now that's an interesting question, What's my epistemological position? I'm quite agnostic on it. I think we have no way of knowing. What we do know is that the brain appears to be fundamental to certain processes; without it we don't have certain experiences. That doesn't necessarily mean that there's a full-blown conversation going on in that physicalist direction, but it seems to be fundamental for it. Looking at the brain to understand certain aspects of consciousness seems to be a very intuitive way of going about things. I do also tend to gravitate a lot to "the body is the mind" nondualist way of looking at it, that it's just one system, and it's hard for me to think about how interaction occurs between two elements because it presupposes that these are two separate elements. That's my position.

BACHE: I don't think it's necessarily a correct interpretation of nondualism to say that the body is the mind, though I understand that instinct and I think it's a good instinct, but I don't think it necessarily is equivalent to what would be classically known as the nondual position, just a thought.

TIMMERMANN: OK, I'm not a philosopher, but I do have a bit of an interest in it and I'd love to discuss it later.

PATRICK VERNON: I actually have a question for you, David, as a participant, which is, when you were at the peak of your experience, how would that intensity compare to your ayahuasca experiences?

LUKE: Oh, well, it depends what part of the ayahuasca experience . . .

VERNON: Peak ayahuasca experience.

LUKE: Peak ayahuasca experience could be just as intense. I mean, I've had ayahuasca experiences that were, at certain points, comparable to a full-blown DMT breakthrough.

VERNON: I guess that could be scarier because it will go on for much longer.

LUKE: It's challenging, for sure, absolutely, but it's part of the experience. As far as Chris's study goes, I hit a nine on his intensity rating for about three minutes. When asked, this disembodied voice appears and goes, "David, on a scale of one to ten how intense is your experience right now?" And then this other little disembodied voice appeared and went, "nine!"

[audience laughs]

And I'm like, "Oh, that must be me."

[audience continues to laugh]

And I only went as far as nine because ten was supposed to be so intense you can't speak. If it is a ten you wouldn't have been able to actually vocalize that fact. It was pretty intense, although I'd say I've had stronger DMT experiences. It was kind of breakthrough, but there was still enough of me that I could communicate.

GUY HARRIMAN: So, when you do the fMRI analysis, will you look at the entire connectome or will you just focus on default mode network?

TIMMERMANN: It's something to be defined still, but I like the idea of a data-driven bottom-up approach to it—just looking at the whole data set and seeing what pops out. That being said we'll definitely be looking at specific networks as well.

HARRIMAN: The limbic network might be very interesting. The other thing is, with people getting entity experiences under the Ajna Light, hundreds and, well, thousands of people I've spoken to over the years, there's a quite common phenomenon, which is the tunnel of light, that they tend to see as a circle, and I believe they go toward it or it comes toward them. When they go through they'll say things like, "I'm seeing my dead relatives" or "I'm seeing these light beings, or beings, and I feel home for the first time," that kind of subjective response. Did this tunnel phenomenon come up, or is it just too much complexity to add to your study at this stage?

TIMMERMANN: I mean, in the narratives we would have picked it up, and we did pick it up, the tunnel, in a couple of them, though not the whole set of elements that you mentioned, which is very NDE-like actually. But there were tunnel elements here and there, there were light elements here and there, there were experiences of going back to childhood and resolving stuff with significant others and speaking with dead relatives on one occasion. But this combined system of tunnel, light, dead relatives, we didn't see that. I mean we've done twelve people and given high doses to five, so, it may pop up [with a bigger sample].

GIANCARLO CANAVESIO: I'm interested in the legal framework of the experiment. In the eyes of the legislator what is the ultimate final application of this study?

TIMMERMANN: It's research in consciousness and neuroscientific. In terms of the application itself it's important to study these mechanisms because they may speak about what is going on in the brain when you give this to populations that suffer.

CANAVESIO: So, it still goes through the Medical Research Council?

TIMMERMANN: It doesn't go, it's not a clinical study.

CANAVESIO: Ah, so there's not going to be phase II or phase III studies?

TIMMERMANN: No. No, that's not the plan for DMT. I mean, we're not seeing huge medical applications of IV DMT alone, at least at this moment we are not. That being said, we are seeing increases in mood that last about two weeks and they are significant and that's quite interesting, so maybe with a really optimal set and setting, with a really clear intention setting going on, I think there may be something with N,N-DMT.

CANAVESIO: Last question: Do you consider that psilocybin is orally active DMT, or not?

TIMMERMANN: I don't know. There are some apparent differences that we are seeing in the data, however. Apparently ego-dissolution is not present in the same way.

CANAVESIO: There's not? My final question, Do you think there is going to be an antidepressant quality?

TIMMERMANN: I don't know, at least not in this format. I doubt that in an IV bolus strong dose you would get a significant antidepressant effect. Maybe? We're not seeing that data being very evident, but we're not seeing a psychiatric population, we're not seeing people that are suffering. These are very healthy people so it's difficult to draw inferences on that. But it's a possibility to be explored.

LUKE: Just to jump in quickly, there is some growing body of anecdotal data of people with addictions, especially with crack addiction, using inhaled DMT to get off their addiction with great success and then maybe returning to the DMT every month or two months or so, and taking another hit. There's quite a growing number of people doing it on that level.

ANTON BILTON: Regarding what Ralph was saying earlier on, there seems to be a healing capacity for psilocybin with preterminal death anxiety, and depressive states with ketamine. I see DMT as more a wisdom thing and a knowledge thing. But my question Chris, you've done your study now, and we've got Rick Strassman's study, there's all these people, including all the

universe of people who drink ayahuasca and the like, who are all having entity experiences, so, what do you think is the purpose behind that; the sense of communing between us and something else? Because it's not a minority, it seems to be a universal experience.

Timmermann: If you look also at Stephen Szára's experiments where you see them popping up, well that being said, he didn't classify that, he didn't appear to note that as a particular phenomenon in his subjects, and I think that's also quite interesting. We may be in a moment in time in which entity phenomena are attractive to us for some reason; I don't know, maybe its Western society that is so completely detached from the concept of animism that entities popping up and appearing sentient is something that is very salient to us. But that is speculation, of course. I have no idea. Maybe we are very much drawn into social interaction. I mean, I could build up theories . . . you could also maybe think about that it's a super-regressive state, you go back into just being a baby of sorts, where everybody is sort of touching you and doing stuff to you and you don't understand. I've no idea, but I think it's super intriguing.

Luis Luna: What about the recollection with your subjects, were they able to recall? There were no instances in which they say, "Something happened, I don't know what it was et cetera"?

Timmermann: We didn't get a huge amount of that, very little. People were quite clear in most cases, and I think it relates to the dose. We struck a right balance between that as well. I've heard about dissociative states with DMT more than once, though with high doses usually they tend to take you to that place.

Winkelman: How long after the intensity rating did you ask them about the content of the experience? What's the time frame?

Timmermann: After the experience subsided, we did very quick questionnaires. I would say from the moment that we infused up until the interview it was like one hour. We did two interviews, the first one was much less structured where we just said, "Spit it out, what went on, tell us all about it right away," and we thought that this would generate a nice consolidation of the memory of the effects. And then on the day after, like

ten, twelve, or fourteen hours later, my colleague would ask, "When you gave us this rating what was going on at this moment? When you gave us that rating what was going on at that moment?"

Bill Richards: I'm intrigued, if I've heard it right, with your finding that ego awareness remained present with most of your volunteers. Can you suggest what kind of characteristic that might be of DMT? I wonder if it might be more either dosage related or set-and-setting related, in that when you were constantly asking them to rate themselves, in that you were constantly calling the ego into being. Certainly in ayahuasca, which is DMT, there's experiences of complete loss of the ego. I wonder if, with higher doses, you'll get more of that.

Timmermann: I think that may be the case. I think you're right. I think the fact we were actually calling them out every minute, the person gathered themselves up and then responded. I think you might be right on that, although I've heard that some aspects are characteristically preserved in DMT versus, say, psilocybin, but it may be dose related. It may be if you go higher up the dose, maybe it's so short-acting that destroying the ego requires a bigger time but then you can counterargue that with 5-methoxy-DMT, because it's been shown that the ego goes out with that one. So, it's definitely a possibility.

Adrian Rosa: Were the subjects more or less the same age?

Timmermann: From twenty-two to, umm, [laughs] what's your age, Dave?

[audience laughs]

Luke: Twenty-three.

[audience laughs]

It was a very short range of ages.

Timmermann: So, something like forty-eight, fifty, something like that.

[David protests inaudibly]

No, no [laughing], we had someone older.

LUKE: [laughing] I'm afraid that's all we've got time for.

CHAPTER 5

Ineffability and Revelation on the Frontiers of Knowledge

William Richards

What indeed do I have to offer this distinguished fellowship of colleagues, researchers, psychonauts, and struggling human beings?

[audience laughs]

I reflect back on the fifty-four years that have passed since my first psilocybin experience occurred in Hanscarl Leuner's clinic in Gottingen, including some twenty-eight years of actively implementing various projects of research with an incredibly rich variety of people. My involvement began during that initial year in Germany, continued for a decade at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center from 1967 to 1977, and is now well established at Johns Hopkins, where we discover ourselves in our seventeenth year of psilocybin research.

I continue to learn more with each patient and research volunteer I get to work with. Right now, as many of you know, I'm doing this wonderful study with religious professionals from different world religions. Giving them two high-dose psilocybin experiences and trying to measure how it

impacts the effectiveness of their ministry. Some of them even find themselves believing what they preach on Sunday mornings.

[audience and Bill laugh]

It's really quite dramatic.

I'm going to proceed with a relatively formal presentation. We discover ourselves assembled here in Tyringham Hall, in response to the vision and generosity of our friend Anton. Thank you, Anton. Within our memory banks, each of us has access to an exceptional variety of non-ordinary states of consciousness, visionary and/or transcendental realms in which our egos have been challenged, chastened, humbled, refined, educated, inspired, dissolved, reconfigured, and loved, from states of death or near-death, into birth and rebirth—often culminating in some renewed sense of clarity, vision, or purpose.

In addition to our personal caches of experiential knowledge, some of us have had the good fortune to support many other human beings as they have explored the antipodes of their own psyches. As they have suffered experience inside, in healing, been rendered speechless with awe, and have sought to share with us the treasures they have uncovered in the evolution of their own individual lives. Some of the experiences most easily expressed in language have a visual component, titled in this think tank summit as entheogenic entity encounters. Such entities are known to appear in many forms ranging from self-representation, regressed or progressed, to family members and other human companions who are well known, to plants and animals and other manifestations in the natural world, to inner guides who seem to point the way and say "Follow me!" to mythological beings—angels and demons, gods and goddesses—to multidimensional mandalic structures and precious gemstones that seem to draw us into their molecular structures, to beings that we may describe as alien, to major archetypes such as the Christ or the Buddha.

What is often so striking about these visionary encounters is not only their vivid, colorful, multidimensional intensity, and *sometimes* their exquisite beauty, but also the stark feeling of reality that accompanies them. People speak of *beholding* such visions, not merely *looking* at them like illustrations in a book, or fleeting images in a typical nocturnal dream. Our

emotions are evoked and released, as Rudolf Otto expressed in his term *mysterium tremendum et fascinans,* and we may respond with fear and trembling and also at times with profound gratitude. Instead of referring to these encounters as entities, one *could* opt for the simpler word *image* or *symbol,* referring to those mental images encountered in our fields of consciousness that feel portentous, powerful, and are facilitative of changes in our perception of ourselves, others, and the world. We not only go to them but they come to us, at times, with apparent agendas of their own.

These encounters with entities or images generally require some degree of an observing or participating ego and thus occur within the framework that philosophers call the subject-object dichotomy of perception. They sometimes precede or follow unitive states of awareness, into which the ego, the everyday sense of self, dies, and after which the ego is reborn. The unitive states beyond the categories of time, space, and substance, with which we usually think, may be found awesomely recorded in memory but, insofar as they can be shared with others at all, we may well find their best expression in music, art, poetry, in compassionate living rather than in human language.

The Russian poet Tyutchev suggests that when trying to speak of such profound states of consciousness, "A word that's spoken is a lie." The Taoist scripture the Tao Te Ching simply says, "Those who know do not speak, those who speak do not know." Those who have tried to speak quickly seem to become tongue-tied and embroiled in paradoxes; the void contained all reality, the ultimate ground of being was nonpersonal yet suffused with love, one died but never felt more alive.

Our research volunteers at Johns Hopkins almost always provide a written report of their entheogenic experiences on the day following their psilocybin sessions, in accordance with their prior agreements, but invariably they do so with some degree of protest, asserting that words can never do justice to their experience. These claims of ineffability may be justified in different ways. Some claim a simple lack of vocabulary, that they have experienced phenomena that felt intrinsically ordered and meaningful but for which we have no words at this point in the development of the English language. One may speculate that if one knew Sanskrit well or perhaps quantum physics there might be a few additional words at one's disposal. Others might point to the structure of language

itself, requiring a subject and a predicate, a temporal sequence, seems inapplicable to realms of experience where there is no time.

Another factor, as noted earlier, is paradox, an orientation of both/ and, rather than either/or, that renders verbal expression especially challenging. Perhaps just as light can be both wave and particle, and an atom can move from one position to another without traversing the space in between, profound transcendental states of awareness are not easily expressed in words. When I try to explain this in general lectures I digress into suggesting a caveman who is transported to the middle of modern Manhattan, and all of a sudden he sees skyscrapers and subways and cell phones and airplanes, you name it, and then he zooms back to his cave, and his wife says, "Zorg, what did you experience?" and he says, "Uhhh, it was big. It was awesome."

[audience laughs]

You know, because he doesn't have the vocabulary yet for skyscraper, cell phone, et cetera, and yet, he probably could have a sense that there was an order, there was a structure. Maybe some future generations would have words to express it, and I think that's a piece of the ineffability.

Now we could attempt to limit our discourse in this summit to encounters, states of ego loss and transcendence, but such an attempt might prove limited in its insight and relevance. In classical Neoplatonic form the completeness and intensity in alternative states of awareness seem to increase on a continuum that, given adequate dosage, personal and interpersonal readiness, culminates in unitive states for many persons. In addition to the entities that may be encountered, the architectural or perhaps the neuronal contexts toward which the focus of attention appears to move during some alternative states is worthy of note. The visionary world often takes on Romanesque, gothic, or ultramodern forms, supporting the suggestion that architects of cathedrals and temples and mosques throughout history may well have sought to construct the visionary world in our everyday reality, perhaps paralleling energetic and microscopic cellular structures and processes, as first posited by our colleague, deeply missed, Jeremy Narby.

I want to talk about the power of intention. When the action of an entheogen or other meditative or consciousness-shifting technology provides access to inner experiential realms, our cumulative experience over several decades of research supports the importance of intention in ensuring safety, efficacy, and potential therapeutic benefits. Intention, I would suggest, is a characteristic of the ego, or everyday personality. In preparing research volunteers for their first psychedelic sessions, we have come to formulate the idea that intention is one of humble and courageous openness, above all a willingness to explore new perspectives and learn to develop psychologically and spiritually, even when some struggling and suffering are involved in the process.

Volunteers are informed that, within the six-hour period of a highdose psilocybin session, a significant variety of personal and spiritual content may occur. They are encouraged to trust the wisdom of their own minds as they discover how the experiential content of the day has been choreographed. Intention thus entails welcoming, accepting, meeting, diving into whatever content presents itself without ego defenses, above all, without intellectualization. We bribe our intellects there. We say to the intellect, "You're so smart and so clever and you have such an incredible vocabulary and wonderful collection of concepts. Now, during the action of psilocybin, you go out and play in the yard, and when you come back we'll give you all these new experiences to think about and you can take all your knowledge of physics and comparative religions and depth psychology and you can play with the new experiences and catalogue them any way you want, but while they're happening you go out and play in the yard." [Bill laughs] I think that's very effective.

You never quite know what's choregraphed for you, but it's good to be curious and open. Thus, if one's visual world is dominated by intricate, mandalic, multidimensional, geometric patterns, one is encouraged not simply to observe them from a critical distance, but to enter into the flow of energy within them, akin to electrons moving through electrical wires. If there is an image, one boldly approaches it, essentially saying, "Hello, are you ever scary? What can I learn from you? What are you made of? Why are you here?" If it's fearful, that fear is acknowledged; if awesomely beautiful, that too is owned. If the image has eyes, one may choose to dive into the center of the pupil of an eye just as one might dive into a swimming

pool without knowing its depth or the temperature of the water. One useful mantra is simply, “In and through. In and through.”

Our assumption, supported by experiences of many psychotherapists and normal volunteer subjects, is that if an experience presents itself, one is ready for it. Ultimately there is really nothing to fear or censor. If there’s some experience you’re not ready to begin to deal with, it’s my conviction it won’t even show up. If it’s there, it’s an invitation. In the realm of imagery, or even in the emotionor thought-dominated states without explicit imagery, confrontation almost always leads to insight and catharsis as transformation occurs. On a psychodynamic level, the scary monster becomes the abusive babysitter or alcoholic father in the middle of the night through childhood, or the devouring dragon becomes the unresolved grief, guilt, or anger one has long been repressing.

Sometimes these themes from individual human lives seem to resonate universally as traumas culminate in new perspectives characterized by compassion and forgiveness, sometimes expanding on the stage of world history even symbolized as the transition from crucifixion to resurrection. Often there is a progressive deepening of encounters with images. From first seeing the image, sometimes in the distance, to approaching it, to interacting with it, to entering into it and becoming it, to merging with even more profoundly revelatory reality, and then returning to the world of time and space, much like the Ox Herding sequence in Buddhism.

As in the ayahuasca traditions, when one sees the giant anaconda one may indeed dive into its mouth and look out through its eyes and then may become the serpent, thereby participating in the flow of energy often called kundalini or Shakti. In the nontemporal noetic realms of intuitive knowledge prior to discovering that one is returning to everyday reality, as non-ordinary realms of awareness open up during the action of an entheogen, it appears that much more than simple passivity and curiosity is required if productive and beneficial experiences are desired. This illusive factor that appears to be of critical importance may be viewed as an act of choice on the part of the ego. It often seems to arise out of the ego strength as the everyday self surveys the overall set and setting and hopefully decides that it is safe to take the risk of unconditional trust.

With the cumulative knowledge of the quality of the relationship with those sharing the space coupled with one’s preparation and knowledge of

opportunities for integrative processing, one's certainty of the purity and proper dosage of the entheogen being received, and one's own inner motivation for knowledge and healing, one chooses to fully relinquish the control of the ego. This choice may be viewed as an act of faith, not necessarily in any particular theological creed or philosophical framework, basically in trusting one's self to something within consciousness that is viewed as more basic or fundamental than the ego. Some may call this God, others prefer terms such as nature, the ground of being, the void, or as Edmund Sinnott, who was the chairman of the Yale Biology Department for many years, suggested, "The purpose of properties of protoplasm."

[audience and Bill laugh]

This choice to relinquish control appears to be rendered significantly more safe and effortless when one is grounded in a healthy interpersonal relationship with a therapist guide or other trusted companion. Interpersonal grounding akin to the grounding of an electrical circuit appears to facilitate a fullness and completeness of letting go of the usual controls of the defenses of the ego. Its importance may be minimized by some psychonauts who often travel alone, but my impression is that without it, the ego generally needs to remain vigilant, present, and in control to some extent.

The persons present may be more than sitters who watch over one's body and are available to play music or respond to potential external distractions. They may also be experienced guides like Sherpas in the Himalayas who know the terrain fairly well and can provide nonanxious presence and can rapidly provide skilled support if and when needed. This is what we're trying to teach people in the California Institute of Integral Studies program in San Francisco. This interpersonal connectedness may parallel or trigger a deeper spiritual experiential flow often including the acknowledgment of acceptance that we did not create ourselves, and as Martin Heidegger sought to express, that we discover ourselves in the world, and our lives and our deaths are essentially gifts that are given to ourselves.

Completely as an aside, there are only a couple things in life I really regret. One of them was a time when Hanscarl Leuner invited me to go and spend an evening with Martin Heidegger up in his place in the Hartz

Mountains and I was just beginning to guide sessions and I'd just tried starting to read *Sein und Zeit,* and I was an insecure twenty-threeyear-old and I was too scared to go.

[Bill and audience laugh]

I'm sure if we had gone, we would have probably talked about the food and the weather and we never would have talked about being and time, but I missed that one. But anyway, it's too late; he graduated from this life back in 1976.

My impression at least for some persons on some occasions, is that on the boundary of ego transcendence a principle within consciousness manifests itself that requires acknowledgment of our interpersonal interconnectedness, if transpersonal dimensions of awareness are fully to reveal themselves. The attitude, "I don't need anyone else and I can manage on my own," may be seen as a defense of the ego that limits the experiential content, the potential insights and resolutions, and their subsequent interpretations.

As Martin Buber eloquently stressed throughout his life, the I-Thou, *Ich Du,* intimate, trusting relationship we have with one another appears to be intrinsically connected with our relationship to what he called the Eternal Thou. I've often wondered if Buber and Jaspers ever took mescaline together [Bill laughs], but I can't find any documentation of it. But back in those days it would be such a normal thing to do to, why write about it? "We just tried this interesting new drug that Heinrich Klüver said we ought to check into," you know. But whether Buber ever took psychedelics or not, he certainly had his own spontaneous experiences.

There's a quote that I find intriguing in his book *Between Man and Man.* He says,

> Now from my own unforgettable experience, I know well that there is a state in which the bonds of the personal nature of life seem to have fallen away from us and we experience an undivided unity. But I do not know, what the soul willingly imagines and indeed is bound to imagine (mine too, once I did it), that in this I had attained to a

> union with the primal being or the godhead. That is an exaggeration no longer permitted to the responsible understanding.

This is a Jewish scholar at age twenty-nine whose reputation is focused on interpersonal relationships. I wish we could bring him in to Hopkins and give him a few more psilocybin experiences, and then we would ask, "Well, is there a little unity and big unity?"

Or is unity, *unity*? But you can see his mental set as a Jewish scholar, trying to catalogue his experience, you know, regardless of how it occurred.

As those of us who have witnessed our own psychedelic voyages, and those of others, know well, the content encountered often tends to be intrinsically well designed, reflecting that meaningful unfolding from within that philosophers call entelechy. We are not dealing with some drug effect that is capricious, random, and unpredictable; rather there is wisdom and intelligence at work, often awesomely beautiful and personally poignant, even if sometimes bewildering to our familiar conceptual processes. When preparing research volunteers on the day prior to their first psilocybin session, I often fantasize that their psyches have brilliantly composed new operas in at least three acts with multidimensional staging and lighting and can hardly wait for the person to experience the composition on the following day. On that day, of course, that person will not only view the artistic creation but will experience himself or herself center stage as the drama unfolds.

In this framework it makes perfect sense to refer to the entheogenic molecule as the teacher, as has long been the tradition in ayahuasca- and peyote-using communities. This intelligence and wisdom does not appear to be a characteristic of the everyday self or ego but rather is experienced as originating in transpersonal realms of consciousness. When one reflects back on the experiential content in sequences that unfolded during a particular psychedelic session, there often is humble acknowledgment that one could not have designed a more effective experience on one's own or in dialogue with one's friends or therapist prior to receiving the psychedelic substance. In this context we might well pay tribute to the wisdom of Hermann Hesse, a man with deep mystical sensitivities, who may never have ingested a psychedelic himself, but his natural biochemistry certainly

led him there. In *Steppenwolf,* he notes the green door that appears in the garden wall just for you at just the right moment. Beyond that door, for those who have the courage to open it, is a magic theater that has "as many doors into as many boxes as you please, ten or a hundred or a thousand, and behind each door exactly what you seek awaits you."

Consistently, in our research studies at Johns Hopkins, the data have indicated that the more complete the mystical experience happens to be within a psychedelic session, the more significant and lasting are the attitudinal and behavioral changes in the weeks, months, and years afterward. By complete mystical consciousness we mean experiential content that reflects all six of the categories of the definition of the state: unity, transcendence of time and space, intuitive knowledge, sacredness, positive mood, and ineffability. Incomplete experiences by definition may contain less of an awareness of unity and less noetic content.

What is it about complete mystical experiences that yield such fruits for life—its decreased depression and anxiety, enhanced prosocial values of love and connectedness, and loss of the fear of death? My hunch is that the answer may best be expressed in terms of the ontological security that remains in the wake of such states of consciousness. A sense of being at home in the universe and the conviction that in spite of suffering, death, and injustice, somehow all is ultimately well. Inherent in this awareness, it's often reported, is a sense of interconnectedness with other people, indeed with all atoms of the universe and awareness of an energy arising within the core of consciousness that many would label love.

In Western religious language we often call this the brotherhood of man or the unity of humankind. In Hinduism the term appears to be the net of Indra. The existential philosopher and psychiatrist Karl Jaspers called this energy the unconditional imperative. It is typically encountered as we penetrate through boundary situations like grief, guilt, and despair on the boundary of transcendence. Thus, if you really want to see the most magnificent experiences and something really personally difficult appears, that may well be the doorway to what you're looking for. Bewildering as this may be for our usual cognitive processes, this ultimately meaningful sense of harmony somehow includes the dynamic processes of freedom of making choices, taking risks, and fighting for whatever we understand to be the constructive evolution of our species. This awareness of eternal

dimensions with this concomitant loss of the fear of death, interestingly enough, has not been found to increase suicidal ideation in terminally cancer patients, but rather appears to empower them to treasure each moment and live as fully as possible until the moment we call death arrives.

Congruent with William James's emphasis on the noetic quality of many transcendental states [in his 1902 *Varieties of Religious Experience*], I titled my own book *Sacred Knowledge*. As wonderful as the ecstatic emotions encountered in many non-ordinary states may be, we know that such forms of consciousness also entail intuitive knowledge. Indeed, there is knowledge to be had in these fascinating internal worlds. This is why these substances have potential importance, not only in medicine and religion, but also in education. Consider the value of experiential knowledge of transcendental states for the platonic scholar, the expert in Dante's divine comedy, the musician seeking to penetrate the wisdom of great composers, or the neurobiologist and quantum physicist who seeks to decipher the structure of reality and the deepest secrets of life.

The day will surely come when the legal experiential workshop using psychedelics can be offered to students and professionals who desire continuing education for full academic credit. In such legal research retreat centers scholars will be able to explore new paradigms of reality in consultation with colleagues who speak the specialized language of their particular disciplines. However, expanding on the frontiers of human knowledge aside, not to mention endless reflections concerning ontology and validity, I find my personal focus of attention to be pragmatically based. After all I am a clinical psychologist. I can't help it!

[audience laughs]

As William James also endorsed, my desire is to place emphasis on the fruits for life of discreet non-ordinary states of awareness. To what extent can the memories of visionary and mystical experiences facilitated by psychedelic molecules enable us to live and die in more meaningful and constructive ways? As already noted, the accumulating research evidence on the psychotherapeutic applications of psychedelics strongly supports their effectiveness in decreasing psychological distress and enhancing prosocial values including enhanced ecological awareness.

What does it all mean? In the wake of profound transcendental experiences, especially those of a mystical nature, one is left with two questions. First, one asks, “What am I going to do with this experience?” Second, is discovery of the query, “What is this experience going to do with me?”

[audience laughs]

Integration does seem to evolve gradually from within and we discover ourselves participating in an evolution of consciousness that transcends our everyday agendas and individual human lives.

For many, perhaps most of us assembled here, will no longer be here in a decade or two, or perhaps three. We will have graduated and left behind our bodies and our books and our research projects. Perhaps in death we will have re-entered into the eternal flow that we already know fairly well, and we may continue to be formed and created in new ways. While we are still here? What matters? Each of us, of course, has to discern these existential questions and find the answers that personally feel congruent.

Speaking personally, honoring the validity of the insights and understandings thus far accumulated with an attitude of radical empiricism, the answers appear quite simple. Why should we get out of bed in the morning? The traditional Anglican answer to that query is simply, to love and serve. In Buddhist traditions it is to chop wood and carry water, to simply be a compassionate presence in the world. Poetic as it sounds, the deepest insight often expressed following mystical states of consciousness is that love is indeed the ultimate nature of the energy at the very core or origin of reality. Dante ended his trilogy *The Divine Comedy* by affirming that it is love that moves the sun and other stars. In my book I noted that the love intuited in mystical states is not wimpy and naive, it tends to be reported as intelligent, wise, and incredibly powerful.

Augustine of course said love and do whatever you want. Might this be the unclouded essence of the energy that makes up our lives, bodies, and minds and that continues to create and transform the world around us? Such love may be understood not to originate in ourselves but to flow through our being, especially when we can be sufficiently enlightened to manifest translucency or transparency. Insofar as we may move toward increasing

degrees of enlightenment—more and more light—I have come to view our goal as maintaining awareness of both the eternal and temporal realms of consciousness and their interpenetration as we walk the everyday streets of life.

Practically, for this mortal man, loving entails honest respectful interactions with family, friends, neighbors, psychotherapy patients, and strangers, especially those who tend to see reality differently than I do. It also entails designing and skilfully implementing well-crafted research projects with psychedelics that may further validate the growing cache of knowledge regarding applications of psychedelics in medicine, education, and religion, and in training new researchers to continue to advance this trajectory in effective and responsible ways.

Far from cultivating a new mystery school for the elite, my hope is, along with the dedicated efforts of many colleagues, to successfully justify the reclassification of major psychedelics in the Western world to remove them from Schedule I and eventually to promote the establishment of research and retreat centers where legal and maximally safe access to these sacred molecules can be found for those who wish to use these tools. A first step in this direction may well be normalizing the use of psilocybin in hospice and palliative care, an application I hope to still witness in this lifetime. Soon thereafter may come remarkably effective treatments for depression and addictions that could transform the quality of life for many inhabitants of our planet. I was talking with researchers here in Europe not long ago who are really envisaging wiping out depression in Europe! Why not?

[audience laughs]

Just a moment of reverence for Huston Smith. He was the last of my living mentors. Huston articulated the distinction between religious experiences and religious lives. Although some new perspectives and insights seem to manifest themselves effectively in the everyday world through their own persistent potency, others seem to be hovering in memory and require decisive if not courageous action on our parts if they are to be meaningfully integrated.

I recall a psychiatrist who believed herself to be trapped in the womb, as hypothesized by Stan Grof in his theory of basic perinatal matrices. She wanted to keep taking LSD as many times as necessary in order to keep being reborn. However, she was also trapped in a job she strongly disliked and a marriage that had become dormant, if not dead. Unfortunately, she was not motivated to reflect upon either her job or her marriage much less to act to change the imprisoning structure of her life. She just wanted to keep taking LSD until she got free. I would suggest that no matter how many times she took LSD she might well remain trapped in basic perinatal matrix two, the world closing in around her and the cervix tightly closed.

Besides possessing its own unique beauty, the everyday world often strikes me as the laboratory or stage on which personal and spiritual growth occurs. It has its own reason for being and perhaps it is no accident that we discover ourselves here. Often the trigger or fulcrum, not only of significant attitudinal behavior changes but of access to profound meaningful states of consciousness, is to be found hidden in the ordinary mundane everyday world of space and time. Similarly, although there are forms of consciousness that appear much more real and fundamental than our egos, I have come to believe that our egos themselves have their own reason for being in the grand design of the cosmos. We certainly have learned that killing off the ego generates more depression, whereas compassionately accepting the ego with all its imperfections promotes healthy human development. As the theologian Paul Tillich noted, accepting acceptance is integral to personal growth and spiritual development.

You know, I was thinking this morning, if we all took a psychedelic and in our experience we imagined ourselves in this incredible early eighteenth-century building [referring to Tyringham Hall] with staircases going up and down and corridors and big windows and great art all over, and a wonderful collection of people, with water lilies blooming in the back, we'd say, "My god you can't imagine what a beautiful experience I had," you know? And we're having it right now. Right now! In this state of consciousness!

[Bill and audience laugh]

There's a river behind my home in Baltimore, and I try to hike along it every day. In reality I do it a couple of times a week, but when I'm down

there it's like I'm in a national park; there are deer, ducks, and foxes running around and the river is sparkling. I think, "My god, this is incredibly beautiful! If I saw this under LSD I'd think, 'Maaaannn, I can't tell you how wonderful it is!'"

[Bill and audience laugh]

And it's right there every day waiting for us, so I want to pay tribute to *this* world, as well as the others.

Approaching discussion here, I have three practical suggestions. First, let us do good science, publish our findings, meet with those who find our perspectives difficult to comprehend with respect. Timothy Leary well illustrated the perils of giving up on communicating cogently and sensitively with those in current positions of academic and political power, waiting for those who disagree with us or who express concerns about the exploration of non-ordinary states, for whatever reasons, to die off so the newer generations can take over. Those who may appear to disagree with our perspectives, recommendations, dreams are also, as expressed by Teilhard de Chardin, spiritual beings currently having human experiences. Within the great unity they *are* our brothers and sisters and, like us, are still in the process of being created, so let us respectfully reason together. Fortunately, the powers that be seem to like statistical data from well-designed studies and pretty pictures of brains from f MRIs; let's give it to them! [Bill laughs] As much as they want! That's the language that convinces right now!

Second, let us also observe the law of parsimony, and strive to speak and write simply in words that most people can comprehend. I won't say any more, I'll be parsimonious!

[audience laughs]

Third, in our public dialogues, let us attempt to meet or tune in to other people where they are and not to confuse or frighten them by focusing attention on experiences they may find almost impossible to comprehend, such as remembering the future or interaction with intelligent alien beings.

Among ourselves, as during this summit, we can freely reflect on the nature and potential importance of an unlimited range of alternative states of consciousness. We have to meet people where they are, and I'm convinced you can't frighten the horses and expect to ride them. I suggest that most people can comprehend the importance of approaching death, of grieving, and dying well. Similarly many would like to live with less anxiety and depression and would welcome effective treatment for addictions and PTSD.

There are educational frontiers for the responsible use of psychedelics that may aid in the training of religious and mental health professionals as well as researchers on the frontiers of many academic disciplines, in the sciences and humanities. And for those who value primary religious experiences, the integration of these sacred molecules into retreat experiences may prove to be of significant value and may also foster vitality in the religious landscape of the twenty-first century. Thus, in closing, it is my recommendation that those of us gathered here, not only continue to reflect on the theoretical and metaphysical implications of psychedelic research as we probe the frontiers of scientific knowledge, but that we also stress, especially in public statements, the incredible promise of this new knowledge when it is applied to the lives of very ordinary people, the mitigation of human suffering and our continuing evolution.

DISCUSSION OF

Ineffability and Revelation on the Frontiers of Knowledge

DAVID LUKE: In these spiritual encounters with divine beings, do they have their own intention and purpose as well? You talk about going into these experiences with intention and purpose. What about what we encounter on the other side?

BILL RICHARDS: It's so hard to put into words, you know, as we all know! So I refer to the Zen oxherding pictures. There's seeing the deity, interacting with it, learning from it, but then there's also a stage of then *becoming* it, entering into the energy that makes it, which may have personal

psychodynamic ramifications and may have universal applications. And then there's who knows what intuitive knowledge that may be beyond that, but we have to get beyond language into pure experience, and when we've got the answer, you may want to compose music instead of trying to write the answer.

ANGELA VOSS: I love the way that you moved through the whole spectrum of the experimental right through to the mystical; it was wonderful! Just an observation, not so much on the content, but it was very striking how all the authorities referred to were men. I just wondered if you had found any female inspirations in your research?

RICHARDS: Yeah, I could've had this slide of Teresa of Ávila up there or something. Apologies, that's just the way it came out at the time.

VOSS: I just wondered, seriously, whether there's a particular kind of feminine approach to this that is very, very different and therefore wouldn't have served your purposes. I mean, I have the same problem with the work I do, which is very difficult to find feminine writers who approach this, who have this kind of capacity to hold these two ways of seeing together very strongly, and I always tend to gravitate toward the men as well, so any suggestions would be very welcome if you find any women who are doing this kind of dual thinking.

RICHARDS: Well certainly in our research projects there are many, many women who certainly have experiences every bit as profound as any of the men, you know. I don't think of it, as in my own mind I think of the male/female poles of each of our personalities, regardless of the sex of our bodies. They're both there. It's like the classic Tibetan mandala of the square within the circle within the square within the circle. They're both intrinsic to our being, you know.

CHRIS BACHE: I think it would be worthwhile with psilocybin and mystical experiences to pause to compare the phenomenological reports of women with those of men, to see whether there are not only common themes but *contrasting* themes! I haven't seen that come up yet.

LUKE: I'd like to say that, historically, there just haven't been many prominent women in psychedelic research, and there's still a legacy of that as well. It is changing, I think, but in terms of very established researchers there are very few. There are a lot more women coming through into this area of research now, but historically they are very difficult to find. That's just an artifact of whatever cultural situation was going on historically. I hope to see it change. I helped put on a special panel at our last psychedelic conference on *femtheogens,* adapting the term *entheogens,* to approach this and related issues, and we've found numerous speakers. Of course, there are lots, but historically there just aren't very many. Not enough.

RICHARDS: You know, there are more and more women in the psychedelic research community: Alicia Danforth, Mary Cosimano, Katherine Maclean from the U.S., Friederike Meckel Fischer here in Europe, and so on. What the research community is lacking is a good representation of African American and Asian people; it's been pretty much a lilywhite operation and I hope we can change that. Many of our research volunteers are not white, there's no question they have experiences just as profound as the white folk, you know, but the leadership is still embarrassingly white.

DENNIS MCKENNA: Do you think a time where psilocybin or something like that, probably psilocybin, can be used legally in hospice situations and that sort of thing? I mean, I guess my question is, can psychedelics save religion, and is that desirable? Because it seems to me that in religion, the West's traditions span two thousand years of brutally suppressing the realizations of these mystical experiences and making sure that nobody will ever go near mystical experience, unless they happen to have one accidentally in the context of these religions. They very much brutally suppressed the indigenous use of psychedelics when they came to the Americas. They brutally supressed the mystic religions in Europe, and they sort of replaced it with their own sort of hollowed out, sanitized version of spirituality, which amounts to little more than a set of rules of what you can and can't do, and there's very little spiritual oomph left to it, if I can use that term. Should we just reject religion, or should we say that we can save religion?

RICHARDS: Bob Jesse makes a very good point, which is that the Constitution of the United States protects freedom of religion, but it says

nothing about freedom of spirituality [Bill laughs]. Religion at its best is what binds us together, and it always has evolved and changed. There's a pendulum of experience, from religious experience and revelation to very pedantic rule-following kind of stuff for people who don't have anything else, but I think it's a mistake to give up on religion, and not just because I spent four years in theological school [Bill laughs], though that may bias me somewhat, but I believe that religions are innate to us. What we're talking about in these peak experiences *is* what religious language calls revelation, and it's at the origin of every world religion, and I'm aware how we can't help but create religious stuff in our scientific research at Hopkins. We had a red rose for every patient, we present the psilocybin in a chalice, what's going on here [Bill laughs]?

McKenna: The power of ritua1, but the ritual has to be a containment for something meaningful. The Western religions, when they practice it's only ritual, and there's nothing inside . . .

Richards: Yeah, well, I can tell you when I offer a research volunteer a little blue psilocybin capsule in a chalice, I couldn't imagine feeling more like a priest, you know.

[audience laughs]

McKenna: You are a priest, but you're a heretic!

[Bill and audience laugh]

But *you* practice what you preach.

Richards: Heretic and proud of it! [laughs] I think that the project we're doing with religious professionals right now, hopefully, will someday lead to using these drugs in seminary and rabbinical education. I think, *Why not?* Why shouldn't some religious experience be part of learning, if you're going to have a religious career?

Bache: The question would be then, would those experiences that they have lead them deeper into the ministry, or out of the ministry altogether?

RICHARDS: Some of both, I think. I've been struck by a number of people who have come to me and said the real reason they went to seminary was their psilocybin experience, but they wouldn't dare put it in their application form. And other people that go into the ministry for perhaps the wrong reasons, you know, social power, prestige or whatever, might decide, "No I'd rather grow vegetables." [Bill laughs] It's similar in relationships. After a deep psychedelic experience some marriages are enriched and some fall apart, you know. It depends on what the pre-existing situation is and what you can do in it.

ANTON BILTON: You said at the beginning you were giving this to people who are already ordained. You were assessing the religious mystical experiences already in service in that regard. Is that happening now, or have you just done that? And are you finding that type of change you talked about?

RICHARDS: We're right in the middle of that, and yes, very much so!

BILTON: Are they going deeper into their spirituality?

RICHARDS: Generally. This is what I expect to find, and largely I am finding a deeper appreciation for the person's own religious heritage. That the symbols and the scriptures start to come alive in new ways, but that's coupled with increased tolerance and appreciation for other world religions, other paths up the mountain if you will. Some of our volunteers for their first time have started preaching without notes. They feel more rapport with people; they feel more connected to people than they did before. Some have claimed to feel more centered when they're dealing with someone who's dying; instead of saying, "I can't wait to get out of this hospital room," they can sit there and just be there.

BILTON: Do you think their congregation finds them more articulate, in that it flows out of them, rather than what's prescribed?

RICHARDS: I think so. They're certainly more open to ecumenical interspiritual projects, of getting interfaith groups united in some social action. And, not to be underestimated, a lot of people in the clergy have some pretty severe psychological problems.

[audience and Bill laugh]

And just sorting through your relationships with your parents and why you got married or didn't get married or whatever, that's important too. So, using these drugs in seminary education would be both intensive psychotherapy and also educational opportunities.

McKenna: You're dealing with a self-selected pool of unusually openminded religious professionals, right? They are open-minded enough to consider that this may have value . . .

Richards: And it's incredibly difficult to find those people [laughs].

Patrick Vernon: Which religions do you have represented and was there any you couldn't find?

Richards: So far, we have across the board Christian denominations, Jewish, Buddhist. I'm still looking for an Islamic imam and a Hindu priest. If you know any let me know; we have travel expenses for them [laughs].

Vernon: Ayahuasca is big now in Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Richards: Yeah, the problem is these people have to be psychedelically naive, and often those Sufis and people who would be open to it have already taken psychedelics.

Jeffrey Kripal: The people you're probably getting into your study, Bill, are the uber-liberal, people who are already ecumenical, who are already open to the many paths up the mountain. That's just not how much of the religious world thinks, unfortunately.

Richards: I think that not all of our volunteers would fall into this category, but you know, we have a huge educational job ahead of us really. I mean, like fundamentalistic Christianity and certainly Islam, for example, is

really anti-intoxicants, and when they first hear about psychedelics they think they are intoxicants, that this is an *escape* from life. They just don't know that it's really taking you *into* the truth of yourself and the world. Yet religious experience, such as St. Paul on the road to Damascus, the vision of Christ risen, Isaiah's temple vision, Moses's burning bush, is intrinsic to the foundation of religious language and we can approach it in ways that make it comprehensible.

KRIPAL: If I could just speak to that, all of those instances resulted in massive conflict. Paul split with his Jewish community and ended up creating an entirely different religious tradition that was extremely hostile to Paul's prior religion. Muhammad spent most of his life battling people trying to kill him. All of these religious experiences did not lead to social peace; they led to massive conflict and massive social change. I think, again, we have to really understand what revelation is. It's not simple, and people often flip their worldview. It doesn't always affirm what people come in with, I think it very seldom does. I hate to break the bubble in the room, but that's history.

RICHARDS: We need some evolutionary revolution in our thoughts and in our attitudes, to serve one another and the world. Maybe the struggle is worth it.

KRIPAL: Yeah, but that's a different approach. You're offering a kind of Trojan horse approach, which is probably really wise.

[audience laughs]

Speaking from Texas here, but historically that's not what's happened.

JOHN CHAVEZ: I don't know if you've heard about Dr. Steven Barker's video, where he talks about an unpublished study where he administered LSD to rats and it spiked up their 5-MeO-DMT 1,000 percent and their N,N-DMT 400 percent? We know that we have three different DMTs in the body, we know that we have eight different MAOIs in the body. So, the question is, if we present enough data to showcase that—that basically an

ayahuasca is existent within us, that we can induce these spiritual states in a natural manner—if we're able to go ahead and get enough data to push that conversation, to make it look silly that hallucinogens like psilocybin are illegal, because we have basically a similar or even exact same system within us, do you think that can help legalize psilocybin?

RICHARDS: We're all in violation of federal law, just by being human!

[audience and Bill laugh]

That may communicate to some people I think. Of all the dedicated meditators who have spent years and years with their breath control and their concentration, a few of them spontaneously manage to glimpse these profound states that come so easily with the right dose of a psychedelic in a supported setting for many people.

CHAVEZ: I actually think that this is accelerating. I'm friends with Wim Hof, and he has a method of breathing and it's a very rough method when you compare it to traditional breathwork. But you have Westerners that are complete science nuts, not spiritual at all, and they're inducing these mystical states just through breathing, but it doesn't take years, some people are inducing full-blown DMT states within thirty days of just practicing this. These are people that have smoked DMT and know what the experience is like, and they're just saying it's a miracle. So, I think that there's an acceleration of this. One, because of the knowledge of DMT as an exogenous material, and two, because we have somebody, Wim, pushing the notion that he has a foolproof method to create DMT states, and he's trying to strip away all the mysticism.

RICHARDS: We had a Buddhist member of our study who commented that the way she felt at the end of six hours of psilocybin was very similar to the way she feels at the end of a six-day *sesshin,* but that it can happen so intensely and rapidly amazed her.

GIANCARLO CANAVESIO: It seems that there are two forms of vision of future psychedelic experiments. Some people seem to prefer clinical

healing trials, and some people are more interested in the interdimensional and mystical. Do you think that in a way the mystical experience, by creating a sense of unity and ego dissolution, is psychotherapeutic?

RICHARDS: Yes, the more complete the mystical experience in our research volunteers, in whatever study, be that smoking cessation or treating alcoholism or coming to terms with depression and cancer, whatever, the more complete the mystical experience generally the more lasting were the decreases in depression and anxiety. And the loss of the fear of death is really powerful and, well, what's going on here? Can you trust that experience? Within this mystical consciousness there's usually an intuitive conviction that consciousness is indestructible. Now is that one big delusion that just makes you feel better or is that really a genuine insight? Then we get into, well, what is consciousness anyway? What is reality? Where is consciousness if we can talk about it in terms of space? And we have these models of the ghost and the machine, and we have the model of the deeper levels of energy in the subatomic particles that make up our bodies; if energy is really indestructible, where's consciousness in a corpse? We hardly begin to know how to even ask the questions, but there's a huge frontier there and I think, practically, being very pragmatic here, do you trust your experience? I think whether the mystical experience is valid, whether your insights are valid is a personal judgment everyone makes for themselves. In my book I suggest it's very much like deciding whether you love your wife or not, or your kids; it's not a matter of evidence, it's something I choose. I trust this insight, and I'm going to live as though it's true, and our lives happen.

CHAPTER 6

Stories from a Life

A Lifetime of Anomalous and Unexplained Experiences

Whitley Strieber

I'd like to thank my co-author of *The Super Natural,* Jeffrey Kripal, who took the whole endeavor of my life to a new level. We wrote this book together, which you may or may not have read, but it is a description of my experiences, and then the response from an academic viewpoint, not from a scientific viewpoint—and that's a very important distinction. The reason being that, so far, the scientific endeavor has not reached such a point of completion that it can usefully address something like a life like mine. I have met a number of wonderful people over the past few days and listened to many extraordinary talks, and what you are here is a group of people very seriously engaged in trying to push through the boundary that surrounds physical life. That's what you're trying to do because you know there is more there. You have tasted it, sensed it, felt it, and yesterday during one of the lectures there was an issue raised of the fact that none of the beings that you see could communicate with each other and come out into the real world.

That's not my life experience; my life experience is the opposite. I've never taken any psychedelic substances, any enhancing substances at all. I

once walked into a room in which people were smoking marijuana. I was in it for two or three minutes, and I was high for a week afterward. With that in my life, it was clear that I had better be very careful with this device up here [gesturing to his brain], because it's not working quite the way they usually do for some reason. We've made quite a few efforts to find out exactly why it works the way it does. There is ongoing work on that right now in fact, because I'm not the only person like me; there are many people like me. Probably millions and certainly many hundreds of thousands in the United States and this country. But who are they really, and what happens to them? The great majority of them are not like me, because they are just people living lives and then suddenly this inexplicable and powerful event emerges into their life. I wasn't quite like that. I'm very interested in things like philosophy, especially in things like theories of knowledge, and that has stood me in quite good stead over the years, as you would see, I hope, if you read *The Super Natural*. Because I am not a believer; I've never been a believer. I wasn't a believer before this happened, in anything, and I'm not a believer in anything now. I guess I do have one belief: I don't believe in belief. However, I do think that it's possible, with care, to understand the difference, to a degree, between belief and knowledge.

In the study of knowledge there has been, for many years, something called a justified true belief, and there were criteria developed by philosophers, especially in modern philosophy, to determine when a belief was justified and therefore true and therefore was knowledge. Of course, going through what I went through I was extremely interested in this discipline, because it was this discipline that could help me understand where I was. However, there is a very interesting paradox associated with this discipline that has thrown all of the self-assurance of the 1950s and '60s into kind of a cocked hat. As is always true in this study and pursuit of philosophy, the hat decks get more and more cocked until everyone realizes we've all gone crazy again, and they start over from scratch.

So, where we are in philosophy right now in regard to knowledge is sort of there. This is the paradox: Imagine a field, and in the field is a cow. The farmer is very interested in this cow and is concerned about the welfare of the cow. The farmer looks out into the field, because he often does that to make sure the cow is alright. The cow is fine; it's standing under a tree. He can see the black-and-white body of the cow off in the distance. So, he reassures himself, "Oh the cow's fine." However, what he really saw was a

big piece of paper that blew into the field by chance and hooked on the tree. The cow *is* fine; the cow is in a hollow behind the tree. He couldn't see the cow, so he has knowledge—or does he? He knows the cow is there; he knows the cow is fine. He's absolutely right, but he has not actually seen the cow; he's seen something else.

This paradox is at the core of my whole life experience and at the core of the life experience of all the people like me who have had this emerge in one way or another into their physical reality. But unfortunately, there is a lack of intellectual discipline, especially in the American community. There's a reason that Donald Trump said, "I love the uneducated," and then proceeded to appoint Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education, who is going to dismantle education in the United States, because we're not well educated. Most people when they have something like this in their head, are going to go out into the community, and they are going to be told what the community believes about it, which is in this case that it's aliens from another planet who have come and are diddling with us in various peculiar ways.

Well the ways that they diddle with us are damned peculiar, I'll agree to that, having been diddled with for a long time. But whether or not they are aliens from another planet is a reduction that is not ready to be reduced. We're not ready to go there yet. As Jeff says in *Super Natural,* "Let's make a cut." There's a wonderful book by Jacques Vallée, who is a good scientist who studies this in various different ways, and is presently working at a high level of scientific finish on some materials that have been found. In fact some that fell into my hands (though he hasn't got mine yet, he will soon). He is finding, interestingly enough, odd isotopic ratios in some of these materials, so he's suggesting that there may actually be someone here from another world. But whether or not that someone is *producing* these experiences—are these experiences something else?—is another question entirely.

Dr. Vallée also wrote a book *Passport to Magonia,* that compares the current narrative reduction in the UFO close encounter community with narratives of the fairy faith and goes back in history over a long period of time. It makes it clear that this has been with us for a very long time, and one could say that it must have exploded in activity recently. That may be true, or it may not be true. But something else did explode, which is our

ability to communicate with each other. And along with the increase in UFO sightings that started in the late 1940s, and then the close encounter experiences that started in the late 1960s—right alongside that—there is an increase in our ability to reach each other with forms of communication. We got better and better at it, until now. If you have something happen to you that's unusual or take a strange video, it can be available on the internet in a matter of seconds and be accessible to hundreds of millions or even billions of people. So, is it that the [UFO close encounter] experience increased, or that our ability to communicate about it increased, or both? We really don't know the answer to that question.

I want to start with a quote. I was with Luis Luna the other day, and he suddenly came up with this wonderful quote: "A dream that you dream alone is just a dream that you dream alone. A dream that you dream with others is reality."

This is from a great Brazilian poet and rock musician who died a few years ago. It's a particularly useful quote for me, because in order to communicate about my experiences, I have disciplined myself very carefully. "I do not talk about things where there were not additional witnesses, at all." There's lots of it, there's *loads* of it, and some of it, to me, is very convincing. As convincing as the things I will talk about today. But where is it? When I say multiple witnesses, I have particular criteria. In other words, if I were to see something in *Communion* while I was with six other people and we all saw the same thing, I wouldn't necessarily place that at as high a level of interest as something that happened sequentially to four or five people in the same house, for example, but not all together, when they weren't in communication with each other. I have lots of experiences like that, and I will be talking about a lot of that.

So, as we go on, let's start with where we are, to just remember something that is very easy as humans to forget. Where are we? Well, there is a guess of—and it's probably off by at least an octillion—a hundred octillion more stars in the universe than there are grains of sand on the Earth. It is so big that even our planet's sand is rare. In terms of statistics, when you look at the whole universe as your base, human beings are so rare that they are statistically inconsequential. Even their existence is questionable. They are less than the least margin of error we can conceive of—and yet here we are. Now, that's stars.

We are discovering that planets are commonplace in this universe and generally more than one around every star. If we are alone here, then that would be quite exciting and unexpected, and in many ways the most exciting thing we could ever find. We probably aren't, but the Fermi paradox is, basically, Why is it so quiet? And that's a very good question. I think it's probably so quiet for the very same reasons that we're going to be very quiet soon. I suspect that intelligent life is a shortlived phenomenon for the most part, and Stephen Hawking was quite right about the fact that this species has maybe only one hundred years left of coherent civilization, maybe less than that. We have built into us, I think, a kind of trigger that is going to turn us off in the same sense that every single body at some point comes to a place where it no longer is going to live. I think we're doing that as a species now too, and we think to ourselves, *Oh my goodness, the death of our species, how terrible!* But I don't think it *is* death, I don't think death exists.

My wife left her body in August of 2015, and I'm not going to go into this in too much detail today, but I'm working on a book about it, and with her. This remarkable woman came back within hours of her departure and has remained in my life and the lives of others ever since, in quite convincing ways. Because she knew the criteria that we used, we worked it out together. And when she returns, she uses that criteria very carefully. We got married in 1970, but I'm going to fast forward forty years. This woman was the one who took the *Communion* experience in hand, who understood it. Jeffrey will talk tomorrow about the extraordinary collection of letters that she did. We got letters after I wrote and published *Communion,* by the hundreds of thousands, in bags and bags for months and years. We got three or four full bags of mail with hundreds and hundreds of letters in them daily for three or four years. Then, after that, they continued for many years on, until email came along and correspondence began to disappear into the ether, where it still lives a thriving life. We still get emails about this all the time, but not so often as we did; after all, it's been a long time. She took it in hand in this sense.

After it first happened to me, I carefully exhausted all rational causation. I went through a full set of psychological tests, a full set of medical tests, MRI scans, a test for temporal lobe epilepsy, a very aggressive one, and in the end came to the point that it couldn't be explained medically; there was nothing physically wrong with me. In fact,

the temporal lobe epilepsy test showed me to have an exceptionally stable brain and not in the least seizure prone. It, apparently—I say only apparently—didn't have any relationship to seizure activity, but I think that we don't fully understand that because I know the experience personally. When you're in it, you're not in this state; for the most part you're in a different state, and I think that has something to do with brain function. It must.

Now let's go forward forty years. A very different human being. I saw Anne at this moment, in Nashville, Tennessee, I believe, and I saw in her eyes so much of what she had done and lived. She read *all* of these letters. Anne was a brilliant and extraordinary human being and collected the ones that had a full narrative of any kind, in a huge set of catalogues. There must be at least ten thousand of them, maybe more, that had full descriptions of what the people had experienced. I have donated that to Rice University, where Jeff will have it in a few months; he has one box now. She said one day something of seminal importance that took this whole thing out of the box it had been in, which is this rather inane conversation between believers in aliens and scientists who want evidence. I long ago learned that those scientists will never get the evidence that they want because the evidence they want is, "This can't be true." No matter how much scientifically viable evidence is available, it's never going to be enough. So, it doesn't interest me very much. In any case where they were, was that it was either aliens from another planet, or it could be true. Anne walked out of her office one morning and said, "You know, Whitley, this has something to do with what we call death." Death! And it hit me suddenly.

In the experience I had in December 1985, where I had found myself first sitting in the woods in a circle with these strange little figures that were in suits, including eye covers and mouth covers, there had been a man. He had been a man I had known in college and high school, in fact in grade school too, an old friend. He had been telling me details about the exhaust manifold of stealth aircraft being defective and that they would catch fire. Something of no relevance to me at all. This was an extremely secret program at the time. I didn't know anybody in it or how to communicate with anybody in it. I listened to him politely because he was *there,* and he had been in the CIA. I hadn't kept up with him once he went into the CIA. I did have his phone number. He had retired from the CIA about two years before, and after the experience I thought I would telephone him, because

one of the things I went through was whether or not a crime had been committed, whether I had been assaulted and given drugs to create these crazy hallucinations, for whatever reason. So, I thought since I saw *him* there, I could follow that up. His phone was disconnected so I got in touch with his brother who said, "Well, he's been dead since last March." In other words, the March before I saw him big as life and talking to me quite volubly, he had died. And when Anne said that, I thought, "My God of course. Look at that."

She began to show me all these letters, again and again, letter after letter, from people who had the dead coming into the experience with the visitors, with the supposed aliens. So, what was actually going on? When we began to talk and write about that, we were already persona non grata in the intellectual community, we were persona non grata in the scientific community, and we now became persona non grata in the UFO community. And there was nothing left but the cats; our cats still liked us a lot. So, I've always been an outsider, and it's actually a very comfortable place to be because the more I look at the various insights, the more I become convinced that there are dead ends. Like there are people who lionize science as being such a wonderful thing—but if it is, then why are we about to go extinct? Because this is all the production of science that has placed this planet in such jeopardy. A kind of basic lack of responsibility for the consequences of putting these things out into the human community, and we didn't do that right, and I suspect that intelligent species almost never do it right. I suspect that most of them don't survive, which is why the Fermi paradox is fulfilled by the fact that most of them go extinct very quickly. More quickly than they have time to begin to be able to do truly extraordinary things, which is to move between dimensions and move between the stars, and to build stable bridges between the physical part of the species and the nonphysical part of the species, because there is no whole species unless both parts are working together. The reason is, we can experience and cause and enact change. Those in the other state have a larger view of time, and they could guide us usefully if the bridge between the two sides is stable. But it's not stable; it's extremely unstable.

Most of us right now in this room fear death; we fear death and we put it aside. We're not like Tibetan Buddhist monks who have the worldview that I might die the next second, but we say, "Oh yeah sure, I know that's going to happen, but not today." Annie, over her life, became a very

conscious human being. She had a very powerful neardeath experience consequent to a brain bleed in 2014 and came away from it with a clear message about the world of the dead, and no further fear of death. She got a brain tumor in 2013, a very complex and difficult tumor. By 2015, the weight of the tumor that remained in the brain was causing her to have a continuous series of strokes, and the doctors told us very frankly that her fate was that she would become gradually less and less capable until she was incapacitated and eventually the strokes would kill her. And she said, "You know, Whitley, that's not how I'm going to do this. I don't have any interest in clinging to every bit of life when I already know where I'm going and pretty much how to get there. I'm going now while I'm still conscious."

This was in late July of 2015. We had discussed it, and I was prepared to help her do this legally. It was not done illegally. By *legally* I mean, if you decide in the United States to cease to eat and drink, nobody can stop you. In fact, hospice will come and provide you with morphine and other means of comforting your departure, and they did, and they do this all the time. In most of the country this is a very common means of dying for people who are in situations like Anne. The Supreme Court has decided that it's legal to do this; no one can stop you.

So that's what she did, and we went through a period of about four or five days. She was very weak when she started. It usually takes longer, and she passed on extremely peacefully. It wasn't an hour before the first communication came back. What happened was, the phone rang. Of course, I can't tell you the grief I was in, because I was the husband of the most powerful human being I had ever known, and the person who has been at the center of my writing life, my intellectual life, and whom I'd been with for forty-five years. The phone rang, and it was a mutual friend, and she said, "Whitley, it's Bell. I just heard Anne tell me I should call you and tell you she's alright. Is she alright?" I said, "Bell, Anne died an hour ago."

That was the first, and I'm not going to go through this whole story, but suffice to stay that there is a bridge between worlds as far as I'm concerned, and between me and Anne it's reasonably stable, and we are writing a book. It's going to be my last book, and then I'm free to go too, I'm happy to say, because I'm nearly broke *again.* And this book will not be published in my lifetime, I wouldn't think; no publisher picks up my work anymore, at all.

So anyway, we're writing it together, and we're basically two spirits with one body—that's why I'm wearing both wedding rings. She said to me, "Whitley, for us, bodies are community property; you better be aware of that."

So alright, let's go back in time . . . [Technical difficulties with the laptop]. I've blown up so many electronics that I have friends who won't let me near their televisions. I once walked into a friend's house, and their TV, the stereo, their phones, and some other piece of equipment, all broke. They just *quit,* and they were all shorted out, and the repairman said of the TV that a bolt of electricity like a lightning bolt struck it. That's happened so many times that I'm a little infamous among my friends because I tend to be rather costly.

When Anne and I were married, in order to pay for our wedding we had saved $200, so it was a really simple wedding. And our apartment was a really simple apartment; it consisted of two little rooms. But we were terribly happy, terribly, terribly happy.

Interestingly enough, I had a series of quite remarkable experiences as a child, but I had pushed them out of my mind as an adult. In my opinion the same way that my son did, because he had remarkable experiences that Anne and I actually saw happen; he says he remembers nothing now. In any case, once Anne and I got together, strange things started to happen. Not things that we could consider are to do with UFOs, though in fact one friend remembers me from those days when we used to have group discussions—we were in the Gurdjieff Foundation (I still am; I have been for fifty years)—that when the UFO or alien question came up, I was always very hostile to the very idea. I thought it was absurd. And I remember I certainly did because I was buying into the idea of, How could they possibly get from there to here given the size of the universe? But one evening we were sitting together. The stereo was on, it was just an amp not a receiver, and it was switched on, but there was no record playing so it was just silent. And suddenly a voice came out of it and said, "Hello Whitley." And we looked at this thing, and we were pretty perplexed, and I said, "Hello, who is this?" And it said, "I know you." I said, "Who are you!?" and there was silence, and I said, "What's going on? Who is that!?" And then it said, "I know something else about you." And I said, "Yes, what? What!?" It never said another word. We were just flabbergasted, and notice what I'm saying here:

I'm not saying *I* was flabbergasted; I'm saying *we* were flabbergasted, because we both heard this. In other words, we were both witness to it.

The next thing that happened was this, and this was the first appearance of some small, short, blue figures in our lives and my life that I can recall. We used to walk back and forth to the bookstores in Manhattan all the time. We lived on 55th Street and we would often walk down to 5th Avenue to Doubleday's bookstore from our house, which is at 56th and 5th. One night we used to walk past a little storefront on 55th just off of 8th Avenue, which had in the window a chair and a curtain behind the chair, and there was often a girl sitting in the window sort of looking very provocative, but not extremely so. She was sort of like an amateur prostitute or something. Anne and I started calling it the "whore store," and we found it very amusing. Then one night we were coming back from Doubleday's and something was going on in the whore store, and this was what it was.

The chair was turned over, the curtain was flapping back and forth, there was no girl. There was a man in a suit trying to get *out,* and there were these little dark blue dwarves running around pulling him back behind the curtain. And we stood there *looking* at this, and then Annie said, "Should we call the police!?" We ran home—we didn't have any cellphones or anything—it was at home when she said should we call the police. We didn't stay around because it was frankly terrifying. And I said, "Yeah, let's call the police." And then she said, "Well wait a minute. What shall we tell them?" And I thought, you can't call the police and say you saw a man being kidnapped by a bunch of little blue dwarves, they're not going to go *there,* they're coming to where *you* are. So, we didn't call the police.

The next thing that happened in the apartment was the trail of blood. We lived on the top floor, the eighth floor of the building, and one night I heard this [whooshing noise], about nine o'clock at night, go past the apartment and sort of down the stairwell, which was right beside the apartment. I thought, *What was that!?* And she said, "Well, open the door and see." And I said, "Not in Manhattan, I think I'll wait to see what happens." I looked out the peephole, *gingerly,* and there was nothing out there. But then we began to hear voices from below, a lot of voices, and I thought, *My God is there something really wrong in here?* So, I open the door a crack and I can hear all these voices downstairs. I then stepped out, and there on the wall was a trail of blood, like two hands had gone along the wall with blood on

them. I said, “My God, Anne. Come out here!” The trail went down the stairs; it went down and down and down, *eight flights* to the lobby. And all the voices were coming up from the lobby. But you think about it: that’s a lot of blood to come off of somebody’s hands, and it was just as thick at the bottom as it was at the top. We were completely perplexed and frightened by this terrifying thing. It was never explained.

The police were called, the police came, detectives came, they took samples of the blood, we never heard another thing. I called the landlord about it a few days later, and he said, “You too? Well look, all I can say is, as soon as the cops are finished fooling around with it we’re going to clean it off, because there’s no dead bodies and they’re going to be finished in a couple of days.” That was how it happened; there was no dead body, there was no one wounded, and the cops finished with their forensics in a couple of days, which consisted of simply taking a couple of scrapings, then two days later they told the landlord he could clean it up. That was the extent of the investigation. So, he did!

Then something happened to me that kind of started me on my journey. I had a very vivid dream of being in another world at this wonderful university. It was all sort of up on a hillside, and it was all tumbled down. And I was with these little blue figures who were very genial to me. I said, “What is that building?” One of them said, “It’s a university” and I said, “Well it’s in terrible shape!” and he said, “Well, the scholars are no good at maintenance and it’s a million years old.” Boy did I want to go to that university. As I was trying to go into the university, I was told by these other strange figures with great big black eyes that I couldn’t go in because I wasn’t ready. At that moment it felt like someone stabbed me in the gut. It hurt like hell. I woke right up, and we ended up going to ER because of the pain in my gut. I remember once I thought about that dream, I thought, *Boy what a dream! I wish I had entered that university.* Of course, I know now, that was when I started my term in the university, which I’m undergoing now and hopefully will soon be finished with.

So, going back to childhood, there was nothing particularly distinguished about my home; it was a typical little house of no particular importance in which some unusual things were actually happening. My father plays an unknown role of some kind in this. He was a very secretive man. His brother Micky was an Air Force officer who was engaged in

extremely secret stuff. After he read *Communion,* he told me that he had been in Wright Field [the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base] in Dayton, Ohio, when the debris from Roswell had been brought in and had been part of the group that had tried to reassemble it. He introduced me to his commanding officer, who was now a general, General Arthur Exon, who proceeded to spend an hour or more on the phone with me, telling me the whole story, as he knew it, of the Air Force's involvement in this thing.

So, there was a completely believable story of alien intrusion, until you get into it a little bit more deeply, as I have, and find out some very strange things about those materials. But suffice to say that I know quite certainly that people within the Government and Air Force *do* believe that there are beings from another world floating around here. Whether they are from this dimension or this reality, or from us and from *within* us, is another question entirely, and I don't think we've even come close to answering that question. I think it's going to be a long time, and I think that the reduction to debris that we don't understand, crashed bodies that look like aliens, from there to "it must be an intrusion from another planet" is really very premature. There's a whole lot of thinking that has to go on before we draw that conclusion, and not just scientific thinking; that's all well and good but it has its limits. We need academics, we need philosophers, we need experts in the history of religion. People who have expertise in understanding what we think we have seen in the past about things like this, and how we have reacted culturally, *as well as* how the brain responds. That's much more than just scientific; it's not that the scientific part isn't important, it *is* important, they're both important though, very much so.

In any case, when I was a child, my father gave me a desk for my room. I was a very studious little boy. When I was nine, they bought me the *Great Books of the Western World,* which was the best gift I was ever given, because it enabled me to start with Descartes. So, my mind by this time when I was ten or eleven, when he gave me the desk, was filled with all kinds of things, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche. I mean, what child who reads that sort of thing ever failed to be thrilled by Nietzsche? My favorite author in those days was Kafka. Fortunately, my mother was also a big fan of Kafka, so I was in a wonderful situation for a little boy in South Texas, which is to say, to put it mildly, the capital of any intellectualism in America, except for Alabama, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, parts of Virginia, Louisiana, and the rest of the Old South.

The desk was put in by two men, it was fairly heavy, and of course I immediately started to open the drawers and organize it and everything. I open one of the drawers and there in the drawer lay a photograph, an old black-and-white photograph from what looked like the 1930s, it was quite old. The photograph consisted of this—there was a coffin being held up by a black man in a soutane [catholic clerical robes], it was clearly a North African sort of setting. There was a man in the coffin with both arms across his chest with his eyes closed. It was clearly my father, so I took the photograph downstairs to Dad and said, "Hey Dad, what's this!?" He looked at it, ripped it up into little pieces, threw it in the trash can, and said not a word, ever, *at all*. Two or three times I asked him about it again, and he just gestured to be quiet with a wave of his hand, and with my dad if you got one of these twice you didn't really go back to that, because there was *more* and you didn't want that more.

At this point I remember little about my childhood, except for one memory that followed me all through my life, of being on a kind of floating raft, above the neighborhood, with these little dark blue figures, and leaning out over the edge of it and making them run around and get very nervous, because I could look down, if I leaned way out, and see the streets and houses going past underneath us, and it was really fun! I was a child who was completely indifferent to danger. I once found a hand grenade in a U.S. Army proving grounds near our home on Christmas Eve with a bunch of other boys. We were there making what we called "hole hats." We made those by lying on the back of a big earthen bank, and on the other side of it they were shooting machine guns in practice. It was during the Korean War, and we would hold hats up to get holes through them from the machine gun bullets. What the military didn't know was there was a collection of ten or twelve little boys, a whole bunch of dogs, and bicycles back there, holding up these hats that they didn't see. They thought they were fine.

In any case we found a hand grenade, and I tossed it in my saddlebag, took it home, banging along on a bicycle with a crowd of boys and pack of dogs, and we immediately pulled down the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* went to *hand grenades,* and figured out how it worked. We decided to disarm it. It was still armed apparently, and when we did we pulled out the little fuse, which is a piece of zinc with a little acid vial in it, and when you pull the pin it breaks the acid vial and that gets on the zinc and eats it away. Supposedly about a minute passes and the hand grenade blows up, because

it releases a spring and a blasting cap. We saw this, and it had been pulled, the pin had been pulled and the thing was eaten away about three quarters, and you could barely see where it was still holding itself together. And if there are no guardian angels, then I'm dead and have been for a long time, because the fact that it didn't go off was absolutely astonishing. In any case, we re-fused it with a glow plug from a motor airplane engine and used a battery and put it in a culvert down the end of the block. This was now Christmas Eve night, and we blew it up, and you know a hand grenade is not a big deal in the movies, they blow up in the distance, but if you blow up a hand grenade in your neighborhood, it's a big deal! So, what happened was this terrific explosion. A tongue of fire shot out of the culvert, the people in the house above the culvert, who had a lake that drained into the culvert, leaped up from their dining table and began rushing around the house, and voices were calling "Hey, what happened!?" and doors were slamming. Of course, we immediately ran away. My parents were having a cocktail party, and as we ran in, my mother, who knew me well, said not "*What* was that?" but, "How did you do that?" I said, "Do what?" and she said, "Well, what was it, an earthquake?" I said, "I think it was an earthquake. That's why we've come home!"

The next morning, Sunday morning, my father said, "Let's take a ride in the car." I thought, *That's strange, after Christmas and so forth.* So, we went riding, and he said, "Look at the lake," and the lake of the people whose house under which the thing had blown up, was completely drained. It had cracked, and all the water had gone; there was nothing in it but dead lily pads and dead fish. They had the lake removed; they decided it was structurally unsound. So that's the kind of child I was!

So, this is the kind of little boy who had this happen to him, and there were many experiences, apparently in childhood, but most of them were remembered under hypnosis with Dr. Donald Klein, who was admittedly an expert in his field. At that point in his life he was the chief of psychiatry of the New York State Department of Psychiatry and a forensic hypnotist. Of course, after *Communion* came out, there was a great groundswell that hypnotism was this, hypnotism was that, but in fact, he had solved quite a few cases, seventy-two cases, with forensic hypnosis, by helping people to remember license-plate numbers and things like that. So, to say that it's not real, or the memory doesn't exist, or isn't competent in some way, is a fool's journey away from reality in fact. But then again, we are about fool's

journeys; that's what we do here to a great extent. These experiences depart from my criteria in so far as I can't prove them, I can't prove anything, but I don't have any corresponding witness so I just pass over them simply to say that I've always wondered whether or not they actually happened, and I've always wondered the degree to which my father was conscious of them.

Now, a little before that experience at the house, something else occurred. I was taken suddenly at the age of seven, in August of that year, to Randolf Air Force Base, Texas, where I was put into some sort of a program. Being seven years old, I can't describe it with any accuracy, except it involved being placed in a very confined space with people, other children, and a terrible noise was involved. This was so traumatic that in October of that year, my immune system failed, and I had to be pulled out of school and isolated in Brook General Hospital, San Antonio, where I was given gamma globulin shots for about four weeks until I came home, and when I was brought home I was OK, and eventually went back to school, and I was never back in that program.

Now, the only reason I mention the program is that I have a dear friend who is now a very distinguished member of his profession, who also remembers a moment when he was recruited for this program. He also has a very high IQ, and he was sitting in the living room with his parents when some people came to his house, a man and a woman, who identified themselves as being from the Air Force. They came to the house and explained the program and said it was for extremely bright children and they should be honored that he was being invited into it, because it was very exclusive, only for certain children. You know, the whole drill. But during the whole course of their presentation to his parents—he remembers very distinctly, because his father talked about it a bit afterward (he was nine at this time, not seven, about the same time it happened to me, but he's two years older than me)—they mentioned a Skinner box. B. F. Skinner was a behavioral scientist who developed a box in which a person or an animal could be isolated and fed only very specific types of stimuli in the expectation of changing behavior. Of course, the minute these parents heard this they said, "Well no, we're not interested for our son," and the people left.

So, I know it happened, because of that. But I don't know much about what happened, because I was seven, I only know that it was terrifying and

it was so traumatic that it actually caused me to lose all my white blood cells, which happens under *extreme* duress. That kind of trauma isn't normal trauma, even like catching fire and so forth. It was extraordinary whatever it was. I think it cracked the cosmic egg. I think it's the reason I'm standing before you today. When Dr. Ken Ring did a small study of close encounter witnesses, the only thing that stood out in that study is that many of them reported traumatic events in their childhood, whether it was abuse or family tragedy or anything like that. When the cosmic egg is cracked, something can come through into this world, *physically*.

Later, I was at was at a museum in San Antonio, with a collection of shrunken heads. I was, of course, entirely interested in three things at the museum: seeing if I could start any of the antique cars, the dinosaur exhibit, and the shrunken heads. I was fascinated by the shrunken heads because the question was, Could the lock be picked? And if so, how much were they worth? I imagined myself on the street corner, instead of a lemonade stand, with a shrunken-head stand, but in any case, I was looking at the shrunken heads when this tall, rather grand-looking woman swept up. My mother was a member of the board of directors of the museum, and I was there with her; she was at a board meeting upstairs. And the woman said, "What are you doing young man?" I said, "I'm looking at these shrunken heads," and she said, "You shouldn't be looking down at that, you should be looking up at the stars!"

Her name was Elaine Carter. She was the poet laureate of Texas, though that does not mean anything particularly good about the poetry, but she was nevertheless a lovely person. She had an observatory on the roof of her house, and she gathered a group of boys from our various friends and started an astronomy class. Her house was a wonderful place, there was a room in it for a harpist and all kinds of things. I went back to the house many, many years later—after I had begun to suspect that something unusual had happened in my childhood—and began to look for ways in that were more than just memory. I found the house, in fact in absolutely time-machine condition. I remember when I went back to the house at the age of fifty and opened a trunk in their bedroom, her perfume came pouring up out of the trunk, and there were all of her dresses. She was an absolutely remarkable woman; she was the wife of a wealthy judge and had fallen in love with a criminal who had been condemned to death for shooting the police chief in San Antonio. The Wild West actually did happen, and this

was back in those days. She had the police chief disinterred and proved that he had been shot from the front not the back, or the back not the front. In other words, one of his officers hoping to get his job had killed him and then blamed it on the crook, and the crook ended up freed. But she furnished his jail cell with beautiful rugs and furniture and had her servants bringing him food, and it was extremely embarrassing to her family and to her husband because she was obviously madly in love with this man. I think, perhaps for financial reasons, he immediately left the state of Texas after this episode and was never seen again, but she continued on.

I remember a very specific set of events. I would go into a flood control area that's very wild in San Antonio called the Olmus Basin, and I would go up to a certain tree. I would park my bike there with some other children, and there was a very straight path that went up from that tree to the top of a hill, where there were benches where we would sit and be taught all kinds of wonderful things about the world, and the past, and the history of the planet, by what I remember as a nun. It may have been a nun, but why would we go there that way, and not be taken by our parents? And why do I remember it as occurring at night? So, I would go to the Olmus Basin and look for this place again and again after Anne and I moved from upstate New York to San Antonio.

One day I was with a man called Edward Conroy who was writing a book about me, and we had been there four or five times together looking for it. We both knew the basin well, both grown up in San Antonio, and couldn't find it. Then suddenly, we find this tree, looking like a big baobab. It's now about fifty years later, it's somewhat bigger than it would have been then, but not much because the tree is about five hundren years old. It's a very slow-growing old live oak. Unfortunately, I'm pretty sure it was torn down because the college built a science center there and it was gone. I said to Ed, "That's the tree!" and we saw the path, it was overgrown but it was still just as straight up the edge of the bluff as it had been. I said, "If we go up there and we find the benches, then it happened, I think it must have. But if we don't find the benches, then this to me is going to be just another tree." We went up the hill and I didn't find anything unusual, until suddenly Ed said, "Wait a minute. Look!" and there were the benches just as I remembered. So, something happened; it's reasonable to say something happened.

Now I'm going to flash forward to 1985, to August or October of 1985 when I was with an NPR reporter called Margot Adler and a rather strange man called Richard Hoagland, who had been Walter Cronkite's science adviser, and sort of after that became rather controversial in a lot of strange ways. He showed me this face on the surface of Mars. Now my immediate reaction is, "If it's really a face then why is the shadow shaped like that?" Of course, he got furious at me. It was later found out to be nothing much apparently, but it triggered something in me because the next thing I knew I became absolutely terrified.

Anne and I had bought this cabin the year before, the March before this happened, and up the hill there is a nature reserve, a fifteen- thousand-acre wild nature preserve, and there are a few other cabins up along the road, five or six of them. Very quiet, very isolated. Nothing bad has happened in that community in its history, really. It's a very quiet, settled, small rural area. But I became absolutely terrified; I bought a shotgun, I bought a pistol. Being an American, that's what you do when you're scared. I began prowling around with a shotgun and a pistol, and she said, "You know, Whitley, we bought the country house for peace and quiet, and I think it's killing you, I think you're absolutely terrified here." And I said, "You're right I am, and I don't know why."

And we were struggling with this when the event [Whitley's "alien" abduction experience described in *Communion*] of December 1985 happened. What happened though? Did I get physically carried out of that bed and taken into a flying saucer? I actually can't answer that question because I don't have any corroborating evidence at all. What I do have is that the doctor who examined me a few weeks later when I was in such pain said, "You've been raped!" It took me thirty years to say that publicly and, unfortunately, I spent those years being laughed at publicly as "the rectal probe man." Which was hard. Very hard.

In any case, I've never known for certain what happened. There is one witness who I don't mention much because he asked for anonymity, so I don't tend to mention him in big groups and I won't mention his name. He was a person with a professional interest in things like crashed airplanes and so on and so forth. He was riding back to a road near our house at two or three o'clock in the morning, the morning this happened to me, and saw what he thought was the Goodyear blimp in a field nearby, and stopped to

see what was going on, because he thought he might help them because no blimp should be down in a field on Christmas night at that hour. He crossed the fence and began walking toward it in the snow. His wife was in the car and very nervous about this, when suddenly lights on it turned on and he heard screaming inside of it. The lights began coming toward him, and his wife panicked of course and began screaming. He got back in the car and drove away, and a year later he said to me, "Whitley, I think that might have been what you encountered, and I've been very ashamed to tell you about it, because obviously you were in tremendous distress. I've never heard screams like that in my life." He was in a professional situation to have heard plenty of screams.

Anyway, what happened? Well, before we make the jump to "he got taken aboard a flying saucer by aliens," I want to remind you of what Jeff says in *The Super Natural;* let's make a cut. We don't know what happened, we only know these descriptions, and descriptions are not events. There's a difference, a great deal of difference. This is me and my son [shows slide of photo of himself and his son in a wooded area], standing in the approximate place where I found myself first chatting with my dead friend and then going up into this thing. The famous picture on the cover of *Communion* is the first image that came to mind from there. But throughout my life somebody else has been present, somebody else. Short, dark blue, and alternately fun and funny and very, very tough. Any questions?

DISCUSSION OF

Stories from a Life: A Lifetime of Anomalous and Unexplained Experiences

GUY HARRIMAN: What's your opinion about Stephen Greer and *Unacknowledged* where he points out that Wernher von Braun said they are going to fake an alien invasion . . .

WHITLEY STRIEBER: I have to stop you right there. I'm aware of these people and I know some of them, Stephen Greer and the whole folkloric group, and frankly we have a lot more serious scholarly work to do before

we can even approach the meaning of those folkloric tales. Some of them must be true, folklore isn't based on complete fiction, ever, but right now, it's in that level, it's folklore. I do know that Dr. Greer purchased a monkey fetus from a bar in Peru, brought it to the United States and claimed that it was an alien body, and supposedly had DNA testing on it. He raised a great deal of money for this apparently, but no DNA testing was ever forthcoming. Beyond that I don't know anything about his claims.

CARINA COOPER: When you were taken as a child to the Air Force base do you think that it was early MK-ULTRA programming?

STRIEBER: Yeah, I do, and I'll tell you why. It went on, I think in 1985 [actually 1987 according to reports]. Some people in Tallahassee, Florida, who lived around a little park noticed some very dirty and unpleasant looking little children, like feral children walking around in the park. They telephoned the police, and the police came and these children all said that they were being taken to a special school for very bright children in Monterrey, Mexico, which I also remember going to as a child. They were in the care of two men who were in a white van, two well-dressed men. The men were identified and the case was given to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, because the children had claimed they were being taken to a foreign country, and abduction across the border was then and probably still is a matter for investigation by the U.S. Treasury Department for whatever reason. The investigation began, and a congressman from the area got involved in trying to understand what was happening. Then suddenly the CIA appeared and said this is a national security matter and we are pulling the investigation, and it ended. This is all documented in the *Washington Post* and the *U.S. News and World Report,* among other places. It happened. That was in 1985; what happened to me was in the early 1950s. So, in my opinion whatever was being done to children is probably still being done to children. It certainly was, as late as 1985.

JOHN CHAVEZ: I heard that people who have had experiences, not like yours but maybe something similar, they experience supernormal abilities like telepathic communication or electrical healing abilities. Have you experienced anything like that?

Strieber: No, not really. You know before this I was an atheist; I would have been firmly in the skeptical community. If I have healing abilities or anything like that, I don't know. I do know of one case though. I had a friend, Morton Downey Jr., who was a shock jock on the radio back in the 1980s. He looked like a sea monster; he had horrible teeth. He was driving outside of Chicago, which was his home base at one time. This was all before the *Communion* thing happened, and he drove into a fog, and these tall figures came around his car. He blacked out and when he woke up again he was lying in the backseat of his car, it was on the roadside, the fog was gone, and his teeth had been completely fixed! So, when I started out with *Communion,* instead of attacking me, he made me a big deal on his radio show, because you know they had fixed his teeth and he thought it was all real! Never say this doesn't have a sense of humor. They're very strict, and they can be extremely dangerous and unpleasant, make no mistake about it, but there was a sort of heavy sense of humor there too.

David Luke: It's interesting you picked up on this idea that it had something to do with death . . .

Strieber: It has everything to do with death.

Luke: Everything to do with it, even better, because of course Jacques Vallée's theory of the relationship between elves and aliens, and of course Walter Evans-Wentz, this massive folkloric study in the early twentieth century, about people's first-hand accounts of encounters with "the little people," and they are always associated with the spirits of the dead. So that's the theme that runs through.

Strieber: Right, we had the dead show up at our cabin at the same time the aliens showed up. In one case these dark blue ones were leaping around in the living room where a bunch of people were lying on cots unable to move, but still able to talk to each other, and could see this happening. While in the basement, a dead woman who had been dead for four years was standing there talking to a couple that was asleep in the basement and assuring them that she was alright!

Ede Frecska: Two brief questions. The number of stars, it's related to the Hubble visible universe, or big bang universe?

STRIEBER: The visible universe.

FRECSKA: Because you know, the big bang universe, it's much larger than the visible, and do you know the ratio? It's like the proton to the visible, the visible to the big bang? So, you can imagine the incredible size. The second, what do you think about the black-eyed children?

STRIEBER: Well again, it's still at the level of folklore. There's no evidence whatsoever that they're real, except there have now appeared a couple of fake photographs on the internet, but that's of no interest to me.

FRECSKA: So, you've never experienced something like that?

STRIEBER: I do have a very good group of photo analysts who help me. So that is helpful because I would say at this point in time at least 95 percent of all anomalous photography on the internet is fake. And 4 percent of it is mistakes. And 1 percent is maybe something fairly interesting.

DENNIS MCKENNA: One very simple question for you: All these thousands of people that you heard from after you published *Communion,* you got many letters, did any of them ever mention psychedelics or any involvement with psychedelics?

STRIEBER: I don't actually know. Most of the ones I read didn't, and Anne never mentioned it. You know I would guess not, most of them, for example, didn't know anything about hypnosis, never mentioned it, or MUFON or UFO organizations. They were just people, you know, the book penetrated the culture very deeply, and the reasons it did was that these were all people who had the same reaction, and this is quite interesting to me. They recognized the face, but what does that mean about us? It means something about our brains; it doesn't necessarily mean something about memory—but it may. I think at this point, thank you so much for listening to me.

CHAPTER 7

What Is the Daimon?

An Exploration of the Oracular Intelligence

Angela Voss

So thank you, David, and thank you, Anton, for hosting this wonderful conference. I feel there's rather a responsibility on me this morning being the only female speaker, and I'm hoping we might be able to have some kind of discussion on this question of whether female and male experiences may be slightly different or we may have slightly different quests in the pursuit of the unknown, I don't know. It would be very interesting to hear what you have to say about that.

I thought I'd start with this rather lovely quotation from the poet and essayist Patrick Kavanagh: "I have a feeling that through the hole in reason's ceiling we may come to knowledge without ever going to college." What I want to do this morning is to go through that hole in reason's ceiling and ask what might be there, if one goes through the realm of the rational mind and comes out of the other side, and which traditions have looked at that place at the other side and tried to talk about it and journey there and find a way of conceptualizing it and bringing it back again, so that we can talk about it and bring it into discussion.

I am going to start with a piece of music because I want to begin by going back to the fifteenth century, and one of my great passions, which is the work of the philosopher Marsilio Ficino. He has been a very important

figure in my life, I would say he has been a daimonic intelligence, and he's been my guide in many ways. In the fifteenth century he pioneered a very radical and modern form of music therapy where he would cast people's horoscopes and then improvise music in relation to their horoscopes and in relation to the right time, in order to open up a channel between their soul and some deeper reality. He would have used music to open up a channel to the cosmos and beyond through the principle of sympathetic resonance between the human soul and the greater cosmic reality, which of course is a fundamental principle of the Western esoteric traditions.

Ficino was a philosopher and he was the very first to translate the entire works of Plato into Latin from Greek, including the *Corpus Hermeticum,* the Neoplatonists, as well as writing his own original works. He was living at a time when he was trying to reinstate the Platonic worldview within Christianity, a very challenging project, and he struggled with that but he reached as great a synthesis as he possibly could by instigating a sort of universal religion, in a way.

This is an Orphic hymn to Hermes I'm playing. Ficino discovered these hymns to the ancient gods that were composed in the early centuries CE probably by a Hermetic or Pythagorean sect that was using hymns to all the different deities in order to invoke their presence, and each hymn had an incense specified to it that would have been used to accompany it. Probably the incense would have been there to enable the presence of the spirit to manifest itself, because it was believed the airy spirits could form themselves in the thickened air and show themselves to the participants. This would have all been very dicey for Ficino as a Christian in the fifteenth century, and he translated these Orphic hymns into Latin and sang them with his inner circle at the Platonic academy in order to do something, to contact something, in order to speak to something. He said quite specifically, "I'm not going to make these hymns public. I'm not going to publish them because that would be far too dangerous. People would think I'm reinstating the cult of ancient daimons, and I couldn't possibly do that."

But these hymns, which are invocations to specific principles, universal principles, known to the gods, were sung and were performed and were used for this deep psychological purpose of healing within Ficino's circle. We'll stay with Ficino for a little while before we move on to the Platonic and Neoplatonic idea of the daimon and other matters, just to give you a

sense then of how these living presences were conceived by him, which comes straight out of the Neoplatonic worldview. Within Neoplatonism there's a whole hierarchy of levels or layers of reality that emanate from a source that's beyond words, beyond speaking, of a source of all being that they named The One. And The One emanates out its energy throughout the whole cosmos. This is a beautiful metaphor; remember, we're talking about a time when metaphor and literal reality are not split into two as they are now. We have to make an effort to bring metaphor and literal reality into some kind of synthesis, but in premodern thinking metaphor and symbol are the way the world speaks. So, when we're talking about the cosmos it's not as if they had an alternative vision, which is our astronomical cosmos, their whole vision of the cosmos with the Earth at the center, looking up through planetary spheres unfolding above them was what they saw and what they worked with.

It was understood that at every level of this cosmos there were beings, intelligent beings, and the highest ones, which inhabited pure fire at the top, were the gods nearest to the divine mind, and in the middle area were the daimons, which were the half-material and half-immaterial beings that mediated between the divine fire and the lower realms of the elements. These daimons would take on forms according to the elements: they could be fiery or airy; they could appeal to different parts of the human soul because the human soul is daimonic. I'll come to this a bit later, but the human soul reflects these different levels of intelligence in itself. There is a kind of understanding, which for Plato is the highest part of the soul, that is deeply intuitive. This highest part of the soul would resonate with these higher [fiery or ethereal and airy] daimons. The middle area of the soul, which was termed the reason, would resonate with the [unethereal] airy daimons. And the lower part, concerned with imagination, images, and sense perception would resonate with the [vaporous or smoky air] daimons that inhabited that level.

The kind of daimon one would invoke would be very much to do with the level of perception you were at or the kind of intellectual affinity that you had with it, and this is very important. The idea of, "Where is this daimon located" is a preoccupation of Platonic thinkers. So, we find Ficino saying, "Remember our daimon and our personal genius is not only, as is thought, our intellect, but is also a luminous being." But you get this duality coming through all the time. Is it a luminous being? Is it the intellect? Is it

both? Does it mediate between the two? So when he's performing his astrological music therapy, and if you read the third book of his *Three Books on Life,* which is called *De Vita Coelitus Comparanda* [*On Obtaining Life from the Heavens*], it's the most wonderful description of "natural magic" as he called it. He said, "Some regard the spirits of the stars as wonderful celestial forces, while others regard them as daimons attendant upon this or that star." So, we already begin to see the difference between an occult and a socalled natural scientific perspective. If you're worried about the occult dimension of daimons, just call them wonderful forces, which can be explained quite naturally, while others who are working in a more ritual, occult way might call them daimons.

I'm drawing us into a way of looking at this that is very much dependent on perception and how one decides to label or call these things—using either a scientific or more mystical language. So how does this connection with the daimon work for Ficino? He says that "Our spirit is in conformity with the rays of the heavenly spirit, which penetrates everything either secretly or obviously. It shows a far greater kinship when we have a strong desire for that life and are seeking a benefit that is consistent with it, and thus transfer our own spiritus into its rays by means of love, particularly if we make use of song and light and the perfume appropriate to the deity like the hymns that Orpheus consecrated to the cosmic deities."

Now Ficino never says anything about taking substances, although we don't know. He was an herbalist, and he worked with remedies made from all different sorts of herbs and plants that he used for healing purposes, so who knows if something may have added to the effect of these rituals. But he talks about the *spiritus,* which in Neoplatonic thinking is a kind of layer that surrounds the soul and connects it to the body. It is not a higher spirit but is more like an earthy spirit, a medical spirit, and if we can purify it so that it imitates the quality or the deity that we are invoking, then we are going to open up a channel through sympathetic resonance. Notice that he talks about love and desire. I want to stay with these themes because they are central to opening up the soul, and this connection that's made, you have to desire it. People were talking about intention and desire yesterday. There has to be an emotional affect to open this channel as well as various other techniques.

Ficino would have derived his ideas of ritual from the Neoplatonist Iamblichus, who worked with a form of theurgic ritual or "god work" in order to raise the human soul to the level of the gods. It wasn't about invoking or bringing the gods down to this realm, as if somehow we could humanize them, it was about working in a way that allowed the highest part of the human soul to resonate at the level of the gods. I'll come back to Iamblichus; I won't talk too much about him now, but this is what he said about music: "Sounds and melodies are consecrated to each of the gods in a proper way . . . by means of such melodies adapted to the gods their divinity becomes present (for there is nothing at all to stop it)." If something is at the same level of resonance, whatever level of being, it will merge, it will form a unity. As he says, "Whatever happens to possess a likeness to the gods directly participates in them."

That's a very important statement and lies behind a fundamental premise of Platonism and esoteric thinking—that you can only enter into a dimension or level of reality if you are resonating at that particular level. You can't suddenly invoke a god if you're just starting off and you're working at the level of the natural world. You're not suddenly going to have a god appear; you're going to have a daimon who inhabits that particular dimension of reality, and as you work your way through these theurgic practices you might, if you're lucky, invoke more and more purified beings until you end up at a divine union with The One. Theurgic practice involves being very discerning about which level you're at and being directed to the right level by the high priest. So, music and the arts, having a direct opening through the power of their symbolism to this other realm, are an ideal way of opening the space. You can't do it through rational thinking, this is the point; it has to be through the power of symbolic image or sound.

I'll just say a bit about my connection with Ficino then and how he, for me, has been a daimonic presence leading me to where I am now. So the music I played comes from a CD called *Secrets of the Heavens* and this was the result of my Ph.D., where I wrote about Ficino's astrological music therapy. But my previous life was as a musician and I suppose I would just have to say that my awakening to these other realms comes through music. My very first awakening experience to a sense of some "other" reality was through listening to the seventeenth-century composer Claudio Monteverdi, whose music some of you will know. When I was a teenager, my friends were all going to discos, and I was lying on the sofa with headphones on

immersed in Renaissance and baroque music. Something shifted my awareness to an extraordinary kind of dimension of intelligence. None of my family and none of my friends understood, but at that point I was not able to conceptualize it, not able to talk about it. I just knew that music was going to be the way for me, and so, I became a musician.

I devoted myself to playing Renaissance music because there was something about the power of the music of this period that deeply resonated with me, and when I came to study Renaissance music, art, and philosophy, the Platonic understanding of the power of the arts to awaken memories of another world made perfect sense to me. Then when I was at university, my biggest aha! awakening moment came from reading Plato's *Allegory of the Cave,* which I expect most of you know, a very powerful story intended by Plato to wake people up, to move them out of the cave of ignorance, just looking at the shadows on the back wall, and to turn them around and move them to a different way of knowing and seeing. I remember being in a lecture theater with a lot of very bored students listening to a very bored lecturer telling this story. But there was something about the power of the allegory that really spoke to me very deeply. From that moment on it was a combination of music and Platonism that completely led my life and directed my life path. Then when I discovered the work of Ficino, it really was as if he was saying to me, "Look you've got to say something about my esoteric practices in relation to my Platonic philosophy because no scholar has really yet understood how astrology, music, and magical ritual could really be part of my serious Platonic endeavor."

So it was about bringing these two worlds together, and that's partly what I want to talk about today: how we can find ways of bringing together that awareness that comes through the arts into the discourse of the rational mind, and I've had to do it through bringing it into the discourse of the academic world, which has been my path. For many years I felt the presence of Ficino with me on my shoulders asking me to do this, and it was probably the strongest sense I've had of an ancestral presence with me. This was very difficult, of course, because he was from an entirely male community, he had a group of Florentine intellectuals around him who were pursuing this, imitating Plato's academy in Athens, and no women in his life at all except his mother. I think there is one letter where he mentions his mother. I was being drawn into this world, and I've always been drawn into this world. Here I am, in a very male milieu, and having to learn something

from it, having to learn how to bring my intuitive understanding into this world of intellectual discourse, so that's been partly my path.

We performed in the beautiful Norman church of St. Bartholomew the Great, in London, when we made this CD of *The Secrets of the Heavens,* which is a reimagination of Ficino's hymn singing. We had the actor Mark Rylance speaking Ficino's words for us. We did a live performance in this church with the appropriate incenses for each deity and that was a powerful moment, one that set off my whole career of bringing this material into the academy. Interestingly enough, there we were at the high altar of a Christian church performing pagan hymns and people in the audience said it was an extraordinary moment of the coming together of these two traditions, which was exactly what Ficino was trying to do, and it's exactly what I'm trying to do now. I think, taken into a larger context, this is about, as Jeff was mentioning yesterday, how we can bring into a very conservative and often very literally minded intellectual environment, this "other," this other mysterious thing, this power of awakening, that is deeply, deeply intuitive.

So that's a bit about me and my story. Where I work I can see right out over Canterbury Cathedral, and I'm at Canterbury Christ Church University, a very Anglican institution, a very conservative institution, and I'm reminded every day that what I'm doing somehow has to be brought into a relationship with this ancient tradition that I'm right next to as well as with the Anglican community in the university. So it's really interesting. I feel I'm sort of right in the same sort of position that Ficino was five hundred years ago, and that's my work.

So, I want to become a little more theoretical now and think a bit about these two modes of knowing. What I'm doing at the moment is trying to find methodological frameworks in which we can create an integral approach to non-ordinary ways of knowing. Although this isn't going to be directly about entities, as such, I hope you're going to be able to find ways that you can resonate with what I'm saying in terms of methodological approaches to this whole subject of visionary encounters.

Here's a quotation from the Jungian scholar Ira Progoff: "There is a dimension of human experience that is not external to us in the sense that it can be directly and tangibly grasped. Rather, it is within us, but the word *within* must be understood metaphorically. It reflects a depth in us as human beings and also a depth of the universe. Perceiving one, we perceive the

other." This is the premise of esoteric traditions, and part of what I'm doing is trying to find ways to weave esoteric knowledge, or weave this sense of the inner and the outer, this movement, into an academic context and into a sort of research methodology. I think this is vitally important when we are dealing with these ambiguous subjects that spill over into these mysterious realms.

A symbolic diagram, such as that from the seventeenth-century Hermeticist Robert Fludd, puts it much clearer than words. Here he depicts the microcosm and the macrocosm, and the human being with his resonance to the cosmos and the musical scale. The whole thing is a metaphor of reality that's presided over by a greater source, and the work of his lifetime is to make a macrocosm of the microcosm. It's how the human soul can realize its divine proportions, how the human soul can realize its harmony within the greater whole. This is the work of the soul, and this would be the work of all the ritual practices, the invocations, and so on, and Robert Fludd's work is absolutely amazing in terms of showing how these two wholes come together.

Robert Fludd was writing at exactly the same time as Johannes Kepler and comes right at that cutting edge of when science is beginning to move away from this Hermetic sense of magical wholeness. In fact, there's a very interesting, quite vitriolic, debate between Fludd and Kepler that some of you may know of that really exemplifies the problematic interaction between the new scientific mind, which has to regard everything very objectively and empirically, and the perspective of those like Fludd, who's working through his imagination and is heavily criticized for just relying on his own subjective fantasy. That's what begins to happen at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The sense of the higher soul, or the sense of the symbolic grasp of the whole, gets relegated to *mere* imagination and analytical reason takes over.

The two approaches I'm interested in, in regard to this subject, I suppose we could call Hermeneutics and reflexivity. What is the meaning of these experiences we have, and how can we create a Hermeneutic circle where we are coming back to ourselves, not in a subjective, self-indulgent way, or anecdotal way even, but in a way in which we can understand ourselves participating in something greater? For me that's what knowledge

is, that's what scholarship could be—this circle of coming back to oneself, and moving out, and coming back to oneself.

I'm quite inspired by Sufi teachings about this process, and these quotations are taken from William Chittick from a book on the Sufi mystic and scholar, Ibn 'Arabi: "In order to know the proper way of acting in the world and living out our human embodiment, we must know what the world signifies to us. In order to know the significance of things, we must know our own nature and our proper destiny." So, the meaning and significance of things has to be part of our own development, our progress, our own self-understanding and selfknowledge within this bigger platonic project. Another quote from Chittick is, "No one can have true knowledge unless he knows things through his own essence."

I think this is one of the problems of an objective scientific approach, that the self can be completely negated, as if there's some kind of independent, objective reality out there. I've been working for many years as an astrologer and diviner, and when you are working in that kind of way with symbols, you are never separate from your work, you're never extricated from it. Pure objectivity is absolutely impossible because you're always implicated in the meaning of what's happening. So, I'll present a couple of the models that we use that go back to classical and pre-Enlightenment ways of thinking about the world, and we find this really helpful for students to begin to find a way to have a holistic approach to their extraordinary experiences, for example.

For instance, we can use Aristotle's idea of the four causes as a basic framework, and I'll just use the example of psychedelic experience here. There are these two dimensions we have been talking about—what Aristotle calls the material and the efficient causes—that are very much to do with our empirical way of understanding the world. The material cause is the matter, the changes in the brain chemistry that can be observable. What he calls the efficient cause is taking one step further—asking, What causes that? Well, that would be the ingestion of a substance, the ritual practice or whatever, and generally speaking that's the level of scientific inquiry as we understand it.

Then once you move to these other two causes, the formal and the final, you change register and move into, Well, that's all very well, but what's the meaning of all this? Does it point to anything, does it have any archetypal

significance? And you cross over into the threshold of metaphor and symbol, and then finally there are even bigger questions to ask about: What is the nature of consciousness? Then, Is there any ultimate purpose to this? Where is this pointing to? Does my experience actually resonate on some deeper level? This was seen as a whole process of causation, so illness would have been seen in this way.

It's a way of using a fourfold framework to cross the divide and start asking different sorts of questions at different stages and not having to keep them as totally separate domains. Of course, what happened since Kant and our Enlightenment philosophers is that the efficient and material forces become stronger and stronger in terms of methodologies and the other two become relegated to areas of *mere* faith, or belief, or subjectivity, until they are virtually nonexistent as methodological approaches at all. So, we're trying to reinstate them.

The other method we use, which, again, is another very powerful one and it's a similar one, stems from the early church fathers, and Neoplatonism actually, called the Fourfold Hermeneutic, which was originally applied to sacred scripture. It's a way of moving from a literal understanding to an allegorical understanding—which relate to Aristotle's material and efficient causes—but then moving toward what they called the topological or moral sense, which is the point at which the soul turns. That was the level at which the individual could understand their own participation, reflexivity, or active imagination in the scripture, or understand how they would have to change their lives.

Henry Corbin writes about this: that allegory is just seeing one thing as another thing. If you see something allegorically, you can still be quite detached from it; you don't have to be involved in it in any particular way; it doesn't have to affect you personally. But if you move to the topological and moral level it *does* have an implication for you, and your soul, and your life, and that comes into the equation. And then, if you carry on focusing and meditating in this way, the idea is that eventually you'll reach the mystical level, which is a sense of oneness with what you're reading about. You can also apply this to images, and you get this sense of deepening perception in a powerful and symbolic art, particularly in the Renaissance. We use this with the students in terms of interpreting a painting or a spiritual or sacred text. You could even say a text is sacred if it allows this

kind of movement through it, or an image is sacred if it allows this kind of movement. But once you reach the mystical anagogic level, you come straight back to the literal, so the end game of this is a whole; it's not just going off beyond into some mystical experience, it's actually integrating all these perspectives within one methodological framework.

So, if someone was writing an essay about this, when it comes to the topological level they would perhaps move into poetry or move into artwork, or move into a fiction or a narrative description of how they were deeply implicated into this, or how they responded to it. This framework is providing us with a very powerful way of integrating these two modes. But, of course, it's very difficult, and as Carol Zaleski has said:

> We have no mode of expression that combines the virtues of analytic and symbolic thought: our concepts are too abstract and one-dimensional, while our images and symbols are too concrete; we sense that both modes of understanding are necessary, yet they seem incompatible . . . there is no sensory, imaginative, or intellectual form capable of fully expressing the transcendent. We can intuit and be forever changed by a higher reality, but we cannot apprehend or describe it in the direct and unequivocal manner with which we seem to know the objects of ordinary experience. Such understanding as we do receive of the transcendent comes to us through symbols, and it is through symbols that we communicate this understanding to one another.

Here is a symbol from the alchemical tradition, which as you all know, speaks in a language of symbols in order to open up a higher understanding, in order to achieve the aim of the mystical union or the inner union of male and female, or reason and imagination, or however you want to put it. So, in the rather beautiful illustration in *Atalanta Fugiens* by Michael Maier we find Lady Nature leading a little man who's holding a lantern and a staff, and he says, "Let Nature be your guide, follow her in your art willingly and closely: You err if she is not your companion on your way. Let Reason be your staff and Exercise strengthen your sight. So that things that are far away can be discerned. Let literature be your lamp, shining in the darkness in order to guard you against an accumulation of things and words."

So, of course, for the alchemists it's a female principle, Lady Nature, Sophia, the divine feminine, that symbolizes this innate connection we all have to this deeper ground of being. Maybe call it a heart-mind, if you like, over head-mind. Plato called this the intuitive intellect. But notice how then Reason, this little man following in her footsteps, he's the one who is lighting the way. He's got glasses on, he's seeing, but he's very much in service to the feminine who's leading the way. And this is how this relationship between these two ways of knowing was seen, was depicted, was imaged. There was this divine feminine figure who connected human beings to *something,* but she couldn't act alone, because if she acted alone we'd just be swimming in bliss and we'd never be able to communicate it back to anybody. So, she needs this little man in her wake, she needs her servant who will light the way and who will help her to talk about and communicate what she's seeing and where she's going.

To bring in a venerable man here I thought of this quotation from St. Augustine—I mean, he's talking from the Christian tradition but he's saying the same thing: "Reason is a mental operation capable of distinguishing and connecting things that are learned. But only a rare class of man is capable of using it as a guide to knowledge of God or the soul, either the soul within us or the soul of the world." That brings me to quite a well-known book by Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*. I found this book absolutely mind blowing. Iain McGilchrist is a neuroscientist but also an English literature specialist, so he comes from both worlds, science and humanities. He has shown how over the past two thousand years or so, our cognitive understanding abilities have become very unbalanced. He started off as a neuroscientist investigating brain functions but then he takes the idea of the left brain and the right brain far further than simply the literal manifestation of them as physical entities, and he uses them as a metaphor. He takes the right and the left hemispheres as a metaphor for these two ways of thinking, the reason-revelation—the heart-mind and head-mind. I prefer to call them two kinds of consciousness really, because otherwise we get stuck on the literal brain, and we're not reducing it to the brain but lifting it out of that level of discourse.

McGilchrist shows how over the past two thousand years the dominance, the fluctuation, and relationship of these two modes has varied a lot. At certain times, when what he calls the right hemisphere—what we might call the heart-mind—has dominated, we've had periods of amazing

civilization and flourishing such as in the Renaissance period. The appropriate relationship is about the right hemisphere as leader, followed by the rational mind, which is exactly what Platonists and Neoplatonists say, and that we've come to a point now where this has seriously come out of balance. The dominance of the rational mind is taking over, and the connection is even threatened to be severed. In other words, the emissary is threatening to usurp the master.

McGilchrist describes the appropriate way of moving between these modes of knowing when he says, "What is offered by the right hemisphere to the left hemisphere is offered back again and taken up into a synthesis invoking both hemispheres. This must be true of the processes of creativity, of the understanding of works of art, of the development of the religious sense. In each, there is a progress from an intuitive apprehension of whatever it may be, via a more formal process of enrichment through consciousness, detailed analytic understanding, to a new enhanced intuitive understanding of this whole, now transformed by the process that it has undergone."

So this is kind of a threefold process that he's talking about, of starting with this sense of wonder, of awe, intuitive connection, of imagination even, and then bringing it out into articulation, interpretation, into understanding. But then, not stopping there, but saying actually there's a third place to move to where both these forms take on a rightful relationship and this is very much what Jeff was talking about in his idea of the third classroom, and the gnostic researcher, who is someone who moves beyond both these dualities and manages to make a new synthesis, calling on both in an appropriate way. I do very much feel where we have to move now is to this third place that is not bound by a faith position, assuming something is ultimately *true* in the sense of religious myth, nor to a purely rationalistic point of view that stops at the analytical, the conceptual, but to move through to a place to ask bigger questions about what does all this mean anyway? What does it mean that human beings have these two modes and how can they find a way of working that elevates us to a whole new form of consciousness, of unitive consciousness? Of course, for McGilchrist, and this comes from his brain research (I'm not a scientist at all so I really do apologize for the fact I can't speak a scientific language as most of you do), "It is the faculty of imagination which comes into being between the two hemispheres, which enables us to take things back from the world of the left

hemisphere and make them live again in the right. It is in this way, not by meretricious novelty, that things are made truly new once again."

So, the imagination becomes absolutely central in negotiation of these two modes of thought, and in my view it's the imagination we need to be thinking of here in our research methodologies. All the amazing value from the scientific perspective can only take us so far, which I think we were discussing yesterday, because it requires this leap of metaphor, this leap of being able to use the imagination to make inferences, to read the signs, to interpret in different ways, which will help us make this move over to this other way of consciousness and back again. The imagination is very flexible, it can do so many different things and McGilchrist ends his book by saying it is the power of metaphoric thinking that will allow us to do this, and the world needs more metaphor. He says you can even view the hemisphere lateralization as pure metaphor because metaphor is how we come to understand the world, and it's our primary mode of perception—logic, conception, and discursive thought follow on from it.

Some of you may know the work of Bernardo Kastrup, who I think is a very interesting contemporary thinker, very much influenced by Kripal and McGilchrist and trying to find a way to bring the mythic imagination back into intellectual respectability as it were. He says, "We need to find a place in the intellect for the truth that is directly experienced." It's an interesting way of putting it. He comes from a scientific background and he's trying to speak a language to appeal to the rational mind, yet he calls himself an idealist and he's completely dismissive of any materialist worldview. He works with depth psychology, and he values depth psychology for its pursuit of self-knowledge, so I was looking at what he had to say about psychedelic experience and traveling to other worlds. He is cautious about it, saying, "Direct transcendent experience is liable to egoic hijacking and misinterpretation unless the individual has attained sufficient self-awareness and psychic integration."

He narrates a new myth for our time so we can start engaging with metaphor, and I suppose one of his key messages is we have to be able to now reach this third position where our rational mind can watch ourselves taking on board completely and utterly the power of mythic and imaginative language, being able to "step out of it" and watch ourselves doing it so we don't get caught up in religious myths or other stories as ultimate or literal

truths, opposed to others' "ultimate truths" and leading to conflict. We always have to do this two-way moving backward and forward, through the stained-glass windows of our cultural forms, as Jeff would say.

So, that's the theoretical part. I want to briefly cover now some ideas of what the Neoplatonists mean by the daimonic realm, bearing in mind we're talking about these wonderful metaphorical ways of trying to grasp something that is beyond our understanding, and trying to pin down and give definitions to something that exceeds our conceptual abilities. I'll just give you a little bit of history here. It's interesting how the idea of the human soul evolved quite dramatically in the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries BCE. For Homer, for example, a human soul is a phantom of shadow, rather insubstantial and ghostly, not a vital part of the human person, and at this period the daimon or the god was very much seen as external. By the time we get to the Pythagoreans and Orphics who, of course, very much influenced Plato, we begin to get this ambiguous sense of the daimon—that it's both an immortal part of the human soul trapped in the body, requiring liberation, but *also* can be seen as a separate presence, so we get the idea that character is the daimon—it is something that drives you from within, but it can also be experienced or sensed as external to the psyche.

Jung takes this up in very much the same kind of way. The daimon becomes an inner force, inner guardian, inner guide, so it takes on a dual identity as both a semi or divine power or personal guardian and a vital inner force. And for Plato this higher intelligence, this *nousdaimon,* is the highest part of the soul. He says, "God gave the sovereign part of the human soul to be the divinity of each one, being that part which, as we say, dwells as the top of the body, and inasmuch as we are a plant not of an earthly but of a heavenly growth, raises us from Earth to our kindred who are in heaven, and the motions which are naturally akin to the divine principle within us are the thoughts and revolution of the universe."

In terms of the soul, the daimon was seen as corresponding to the imagination, so the imagination mediates between the highest part of the soul and the sense perception in the same way that the cosmos mediates between the divine and earthly realms, so you can see the resonances between these two models. But the daimon is also a separate entity, or guide, to the world of the afterlife, the guardian daimon. Socrates for

instance was always consulting his personal daimonic voice. Plato says of the daimons, “They act as interpreters and conveyers of human things to the gods, of divine things to men. They carry the prayers and sacrifices of men, the commandments of the gods and their responses to sacrifices occupying a place between the two, they fill up a gap and cause the whole universe to be a coherent whole. All divination takes place by their means; the art of priests, the art of sacrifices and mystical rites and incantations, in a word, all divining and magic.”

I forgot to say at the beginning, when talking about Ficino’s magic, that the altered state of consciousness entered into during ritual practice is what Plato calls divine frenzy. For Plato, the priest, the lover, the prophet, and the poet have access to this space beyond normal awareness that is a divine frenzied space, evoked through the power of love, Eros, through the power of ritual, through the power of prophecy, and through the power of inspired poetry or music. Love, ritual, and the arts could all propel you to a state of mind where the daimons will start speaking with you.

Plutarch is a very interesting writer. He was a high priest at Delphi, and he too talks about narratives in which people travel to the other world. In his *Myth of Timarchus,* a young man suffered a blow on the head, and a whole other world opened up to him. He was shown the afterlife and he was shown the daimons as lights. There are many accounts in the ancient world of daimons being visible as different kinds or intensities of lights. I think it’s quite interesting in the new age literature how lights seem to be the most common way in which people observe the daimonic realm, unless you’re somebody like Whitley who experiences extraordinarily anthropomorphic manifestations of these beings. So, Plutarch again raises this ambiguity: “The multitude take the understanding to be within themselves, as they take reflected objects to be in the mirrors that reflect them, but those who conceive the matter rightly call it a daimon, as being external.” I think here Plutarch is worrying about a reduction of this daimonic principle to a personal ego, but it’s not like that, it verges on this ambiguous level of both/and, not either/or.

For Plotinus similarly, “a celestial, a daimon, is the representative generated by each soul when it enters the cosmos.” These great teachers of the premodern world (they are of course all men), speak in this language that is a complete coincidence of rational and intuitive thinking. It’s the way

they articulate and speak and they kind of take you to that place by their very language. Plotinus speaks in a way that encourages your soul to move to this nondiscursive place by his very language. He talks about the daimon being part of the cosmos and yet not part of it at the same time, and the whole cosmos becomes a great daimon, a great living being.

I'll just talk about the idea then that the imagination itself is a daimon, as this is quite an unusual way of thinking about it for us. So the Neoplatonists, and this is very much what they worked with in their ritual practice of theurgy, understood that "when the soul descends into the body it is accompanied by what they call the *pneuma* or the *ochema,* its astral vehicle," which you might call the astral body, "which it gathers from the spheres" as it descends through them on its way to incarnation. This is a myth recounted also in the *Corpus Hermeticum*. "Phantasia," or imagination, "is impressed on the pneuma or it is identified with the pneuma and it becomes the *pneuma phantastikon,* an all-embracing sense organ, very sensitive to the condition of the soul. It mediates between incorporeal and corporeal worlds and enables the divine to contact matter," and it is, itself, daimonic; it itself has this divine element to it, so no wonder that if we can contact this higher imagination in our souls, we can actually start resonating with daimonic intelligences. Synesius, who writes about how the daimon appears in dreams, says, "The whole of the genera of daimons are supplied with their substance by this mode of life, the imaginative. For during the whole of their existence they are of the nature of images and take on the appearances of happenings . . . for the orders of daimons make thoughts always to have some mixture of imagination, except perchance a man in a flash establish immaterial contact with an idea."

So, it is possible to have some kind of direct hotline through to some transcendent reality, but for the most part ritual processes are about moving through this middle ground of the daimons, through your imagination, to enter the deeper space, and this is what theurgy is about. I don't know if any of you know about the work of Greg Shaw, but he has been one of my great inspirations in writing about the theurgist and Neoplatonist Iamblichus. Iamblichus obviously was to him a daimonic presence as Ficino was for me, and he writes about him with tremendous passion and understanding. Iamblichus wrote *On the Mysteries* about divinatory practices in the late antique world, involving communion with the daimons in order to raise the

soul from earthly concerns and eventually realize its own innate divinity. As Greg beautifully states, this kind of work is not of the head, but the heart, “It is not by our knowing, calculating—or predicting that we ascend to the gods, but by the intensity and quality of our longing.”

That really encapsulates what the theurgic process is about. It was about engaging the emotional, the affective, intuitive, imaginative sense through seeing the world as symbol in order to move through to what the symbol was pointing to, through ritual practice, but combining it with a deep sense of philosophy, of how the rational mind understands this and processes this and talks about it, but is always in service to it. So, Iamblichus writes this treatise in response to a very rational philosopher called Porphyry who wants him to answer specific questions. Porphyry will say, “Tell me what the gods are, what are these entheogenic entities, what are they?” and Iamblichus will say, “Well that’s completely the wrong question to ask because you will never find out by trying to give a conceptual abstract answer. You will only find out by finding the place in your soul that resonates with them, and then you will know what they are.” So you can start from there, and then you can start speaking about what they might be. You can’t start from trying to analyze from the outside because you don’t know. How can you know if you’re just trying to conceive of them in that distanced kind of way?

So, in a very small nutshell that’s what theurgy is about. I just have some more quotations about how the symbol is the form that mirrors divine ideas to sense perception and allows this connection to open. The symbol becomes all important whether it’s the statue, whether it’s the daimon, the light, or the musical invocation. The point is, if it’s in conformity with the archetype, if it imitates the higher beings, it will allow you to also shift your mode of consciousness to what it points to. It’s wonderful prose. I really do recommend reading Iamblichus because he’s so grounded in the real world, he doesn’t move off into transcendent states like Plotinus, and his rituals are all about where you are in the world and the symbols that matter to you. And I’m very interested to know whether people might think that the processes of contacting the divine through psychedelic experiences could be regarded as theurgic in this sense; could they be seen in this framework of moving on an individual journey to achieve some kind of union and whether people have that sort of context for it.

Finally, just a little more about theurgy, and Iamblichus's hierarchy of different intelligences. The daimons weren't just generalized; they were infinite dimensions of beings right from the lowest material ones to the highest immaterial ones, and you worked your way through according to what was appropriate to your condition of soul. You wouldn't expect to be contacting a god immediately; you would expect to work your way up the ladder. I'll just finish with this quote because in a way this sort of sums up the issue as seen by the Neoplatonists. This is Proclus, the last great Neoplatonist, who talks a lot about statue magic, theories of theurgy, and why is it that this works, why symbols have such power. He says, "The gods themselves are incorporeal, but since those who see them possess bodies, the visions which issue from the gods to worthy recipients possess a certain quality from the gods who send them, but also have something connatural with those who see them. That is why the gods are seen yet not seen at all in fact. In fact, those who see the gods witness them in the luminous garments of their souls. The point is they are often seen when the eyes are shut."

They are seen through the imagination and if we try and reduce them to sense-perception realities, if we try and reduce them to objective entities, I feel we are barking up the wrong tree. If we're going to create holistic research methods, then we have to change our mode of perception, and open up our discursive minds to the symbolic, the intuitive, the ineffable, and the ultimate mystery of an intelligent cosmos beyond the limitations of individual experience.

DISCUSSION OF

What Is the Daimon? An Exploration of the Oracular Intelligence

LINDA PATCHEN: What I was reading last night, which was truly inspiring, is the importance of the pure subjective experience as access to divine knowledge, as access, as he said, to direct cognizance, and in order to do so one must put the rational sensate mind to sleep and enter into the subliminal mind. I just wanted to share that. The other thing was, regarding your

question whether sacred medicine is a path to this knowledge, I would say, absolutely; it is truly a way to embody and experience the divine from the inside out, through pure subjectivity, that allows us not only access but the honor of embodying the divine. So, yes, thank you.

JERRY PATCHEN: One of the later Neoplatonists talked about the gods being formless and shapeless, and it is the imaginal that gives form and shape and the vision of the gods. I kind of reduce that to "spirit appears as image but spirit is not the image." I wonder, when we just juxtapose that to giving form to these entities, are we looking at Plato's shadows in the cave, or are we making a rational egoic judgment about these entities? And is the imaginal or imagination our term for the daimons?

ANGELA VOSS: Well of course Plato himself has a rather ambiguous attitude toward imagination. I think the first thing to say is that Plato's cave does not use the vocabulary of the imagination. So, when Plato's talking about the cave, he's talking about sense perception that is a literal approach to life, when we're just sitting and looking at shadows and interpreting them as the ultimate reality. But when he says, "You move out of the cave and start seeing things as they really are," he doesn't use the word *imagination;* for him that's the intellectual understanding. It's only with the later Platonists like Plotinus, Synesius, and Iamblichus that we start getting a distinction between a higher imagination, which is the tool by which we start seeing these things, and the lower imagination, which is just the personal fantasy of people who only see the shadows on the cave wall.

So in terms of whether our images are one or the other, I think you're absolutely right, and I think this is the problem that someone like Corbin identified very strongly, that we have to distinguish between art and images that keep us in the cave, in other words as a product of human fantasy, and art and images that help to lead you out of the cave and that the higher imagination can engage with because they've been created in this, sort of, higher reality therefore they can convey it back. And it's very easy to get fixed literally on the definition of something and assume this is then what it is, objectively, without understanding that actually it can only be seen the way that we clothe it through our personal or cultural imagination. Jeff has talked about this a lot: that we culturally clothe it through our particular beautiful stained-glass window, but, actually, we have to move through that

to what is then coming through the image that we are perceiving. Seeing it that way is very different from seeing it as an image in a cave, as a fixed reality, ultimate reality, this is what it is, this is my truth and there's nothing more.

JOHN CHAVEZ: You mentioned music as part of your awakening. When I had my awakening it was a strange sensation. I became physically incapable of listening to music that I'd listened to prior to the experience. It felt like a syringe in my stomach draining my energy, and when I listened to harplike heavenly music it felt like it had a completely different sensation where it fed me somehow. I'm interested in your experience in terms of music in your awakening.

VOSS: Certain kinds of music just have a power to evoke. I think it's all connected with how I understand Platonic Eros. For me, the impulse to the awakening comes from a *deeply* erotic connection with the world, with the arts, with people, with music. It's a sense of longing that's evoked, for me, by very powerful music, which I don't think anything else has done so powerfully. We all resonate with different periods of music, all different kinds of music, which may be connected with past lives, perhaps. It's interesting to ask why Renaissance music has this effect on me, but it evokes a sense of absolute longing that I know I'm going to have to follow and find beyond the rational mind. I suppose that's all I can say, and that's what's led me to do what I'm doing, and for some reason it's led me to wanting to find a way to translate this through into an academic project and evoke that longing in students, through the kind of material that we're dealing with in order to make that connection. Even though I don't play much music now, I try to think of what I'm doing in terms of music.

EDE FRECSKA: Two years ago, my presentation here was about the second foundation of knowledge, and I said there is a subjective way, learning from observation from the inside, and we can get a representation of the outside world if we go inside. You gave an excellent quote: "There is a dimension of human experience that is not external to us in the sense that it can be directly and tangibly grasped." This is the learning by observation from the inside that is contrary to the rest of scientific learning, by observation from the outside, objectively. I also stated last time that from the inside we can get a picture not only about ourselves but of the outside world, and that is

nothing new, every mystical tradition says that, so I'm basically repeating that, but I tried to find a physical foundation for it and suggested that nonlocal correlation can give us this kind of representation of the outside, and I can find this expressed here in the Neoplatonic language: "It reflects a depth in us as human beings and also a depth of the universe." Because, for nonlocality, in and out doesn't make sense. So, thank you very much, it reinforced my delusions.

[audience laughs]

MICHAEL WINKELMAN: I want to say thank you for your wide-ranging talk. It certainly introduced a lot of existential transcendental mystical concepts about the nature of humans and their way to know the world. I hope you have a paper available that we can read and reflect upon and follow your primary sources, as I find it very stimulating. I wanted to present two questions to you. One, it seems to me that you're seeing these daimons as really being inherent and intrinsic to human beings rather than extrinsic, or only extrinsic, but as a part of our nature. I wondered if you want to comment upon that in relation to the notion of the innate modules. And secondly, concerning memetic theory, mimesis, where image and behavior are the same, where they are processed the same way in the brain, I was waiting to see if you were going to go in that direction. I was wondering if you've reflected on how memetic theory forms all of this?

VOSS: Image and behavior are the same, did you say?

WINKELMAN: Yes, because what we see in behavior is an image, and from the point of view of mirror neurons it's the same neural system that activates our own goal-directed behavior and provides the representation of the image that we perceive of somebody else's goal-directed behavior. So, to me, images and behavior have the same foundations in the brain. Memetic theory, by René Girard, has been a little neglected, but it's sort of intersecting with contemporary neuroscience about how it is that we understand the world from the beginning of life by virtue of observing behavior, because it evokes through the image of the behavior the same set of brain neurons that produce the same behavior in us. So, a little more complex question than I intended.

[audience laughter]

But, one, daimons and innate modules, and two, where does memetic theory help illuminate all this?

Voss: Well I don't think I can answer that because I haven't really had time to think through this question of behavior and image, and I was just saying earlier I actually find conceptual thinking *extremely* hard and I tend to think through my intuition, so I would have to think through that, and also because I don't know anything at all about neurology or brain science apart from what I've read in McGilchrist. But in terms of whether the daimon is within or without we're back to this: it's the wrong question to ask as Iamblichus would say, because I don't think it's either/ or at all. I think we're talking about an experience that, from the point of view of, perhaps, the more rational mind, it may be viewed as external, and maybe from the point of view of the more inner meditative mind may be experienced as internal. So as someone like Ibn 'Arabi would say, I think we have to see where we situate ourselves in order to know how we understand. So you could decide to situate yourself within a very rational scientific point of view and locate the daimon as external and let's subjectively try to understand what it is, photograph it, record it; "Oh yes it's this entity out there." Or you could say, "No, actually I'm going to do a more inner journey and understand how it might reveal itself through my imagination, through my dreams, through other means." So, I don't think we can possibly answer that question. I think it's a multileveled experience and it very much depends on where you're coming from.

Chris Bache: I think, while you're not discussing psychedelics directly, the ideas you've presented are absolutely essential for the discussion of the ontological status of entities that we encounter in psychedelic states. Particularly this beautiful passage that what we experience is a comingling of something that comes from above and our own being, and this all gets wrapped together. And when those experiences are so powerful, we can get completely caught up with that reality; but if our experience continues to press that reality, the humanoid, or the anthropomorphic form, starts to fall away and we go into deeper manifestations of this being emerging out of a higher level of consciousness until, eventually, that entire domain of being

falls away and we drop into an even deeper level of reality. So, [it is] this combination of the insight, that our experiences are always comingling, of what we bring and what is coming, combined with an emanationist cosmology of creativity, or an involutionary one, so the infinite *one* is manifesting layer after layer after layer, and those layers have all the qualities of that fractal embodiment of the totality, and yet they do have an increasing individuality as we move descending down, and we, of course, are in the middle of that cosmology. So, the daimon is really right in the very center and is every level between us and the totality. That is, I think, absolutely essential.

VOSS: Yes, and that just reminded me of a quote I have from Ralph Abraham, just to bring us up to date, how people are *still* speaking in Neoplatonic language about this. You probably know the trialogues of Ralph Abraham, Terrence McKenna, and Rupert Sheldrake where they muse on all these things, and I found Ralph Abraham talking about how these abstract entities descend through the multilevel, multidimensional spheres and become ever more, sort of, material as they descend through the spheres, and this metaphor of the spheres comes up again and again and again in channeled literature, in Neoplatonic literature, in Hermetic literature, in modern literature, and in people's experiences. There's always this sense of the unfolding spheres getting denser and denser as you come down and, as he says, at the lower levels, "they are forced into representations that are culturally dependent, such as fairies, dakinis, elementals, and so on." So, I think it's a very, very powerful metaphor for something that's hovering behind those stained-glass windows, whatever it may be.

BACHE: The tricky thing sometimes about psychedelics, if you're working with a particular psychedelic, in a particular way that takes you to a certain place, one can take the qualities of that place as reflexive of the totality.

VOSS: Absolutely, and that's one of the dangers that Jung points to as well, and Jeff was talking about this yesterday, and that's the danger of any sort of religious position that once it gleans something from somewhere it becomes so comfortable for the soul to take that as its truth that then it has to hold on to it as being the only truth, and therefore someone else's truth is therefore opposed to it. And I think you're right, there's a terrible danger of

being fixed on a certain level as being absolute. I have to admit to never having taken anything but then I have very powerful dreams where I meet spirit guides, but those of you who have taken psychedelics, do you feel that you're on a journey that is moving progressively through these levels? I mean, do you feel that?

David Luke: Yes, but sometimes up, and sometimes down. I'd just like to jump in if I can. I quite liked your Aristotelian causes. There's a great story from the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, which I'm going to misquote because I can't quite remember the exact story. But he's working in this indigenous community, among the Azande people, and there's an incident where somebody's broken some kind of local taboo and later on they are sitting under a granary in the shade and it collapses and just kills them dead, and the locals were all like, "Well, that's why the granary collapsed and killed them, because they'd done this bad thing." And the anthropologist said, "Well, surely, it's because termites have eaten through the wood and it happened to break at the moment they were sitting under it," and the locals said, "Oh yeah that's *how* it happened, but that's not *why* it happened when it did."

Voss: Exactly. That's a really good story. Of course, the more so-called primitive people know perfectly well that you can just hold these two things, they know perfectly well termites can eat the wood, but they also know there's a moral or existential reason why this happened too. There's no incompatibility between these two modes. I do think we need to come back to that sense of holding them both as just different modes of understanding the same thing.

Ralph Metzner: In what time period was Proclus writing?

Voss: He was fifth century CE.

Metzner: In Greece. So, one statement of his I thought fits to my understanding of the kind of thing you see in psychedelic visions, or any kind of visions, that the gods can't really be seen, but, when they present themselves to people, they take the form that the people will understand. So, they're kind of a blend of their inherent form but also taking on the form the people who are seeing understand. This can be variable, and that

ends up being very confusing to us because people are like, "Well I see them like *this,*" but others say, "Well, I see them as *this,*" and more say, "Well, *I* see them as *this*." It can't all be true, but yes it can.

Voss: We've got this terrible wound that McGilchrist talks about that, although the Enlightenment was a fantastic step forward in terms of us being able to self-reflect, it was also an immense wound in the severing of these two modes of thinking, which I feel we need to reconnect. I think the new age in its entirety is trying to reconnect in some way. That reminds me of someone like Ibn 'Arabi, for example, the great Sufi sage. He sees ancestors as he's walking around the square and they materialize to him and they're like normal human beings and sometimes he sees them, but his friends don't, and yet sometimes he sees them, and everybody sees them. These visions can be material, nonmaterial, they can manifest in certain ways, it's so fluid and flexible. This insistence we seem to have on the question—Are they material or nonmaterial, are they democratically seen by everyone?—it's just not part of the way that premoderns understood the world, and I think we can learn from that.

CHAPTER 8

Making Space and Time for Mind and Psychedelia

Bernard Carr

My title is “Making Space and Time for Mind and Psychedelia,” and I will be approaching this topic partly in my capacity as a physicist. Of course, we know where we are in space and time—the space is Tyringham Hall and the time is May 31, 2017—but I hope to address the subject in more detail than that.

[audience laughter]

Also, I was very struck that Ralph Metzner’s talk had the wonderful phrase, “mind, space, and time stream” (the title of one of his books), and that would have been a great title for my own talk.

Now I have to admit that I’m really standing here under false pretenses because I have very little experience of psychedelia and so am really only approaching the subject as a theorist. This is embarrassing because I remember David Luke writing in one of his articles that it’s absurd to study this field and not actually have the experience, so I have to plead guilty to that. But that’s actually no different from my career as an astronomer

because—as a theoretical cosmologist—I never have to look through a telescope!

On the other hand, I can claim some connection with the subject through my friend John Smythies, who not only inspired my interest in higher dimensional models of matter and mind (the main topic of my talk) but was also a pioneer in psychedelic research. Indeed, I contacted John before coming here to ask him for some reminiscences about his early days as a psychedelic researcher, and here is how he replied, "The subjects for my psychedelic experiments in Cambridge in the 1950s included Broad, Price, and Zaehner. I was also responsible for introducing Aldous Huxley to Humphrey Osmond, who was in Los Angeles at the time and administered mescaline to him. Aldous had written to me, asking if I could provide some of the drug." So John introduced Huxley to mescaline and there's a recent book about this, *Aldous Huxley's Hands,* by Allene Symons. I would like to dedicate this talk to John since he was a champion of both psychedelia and higher dimensions.[*1]

Let me start with a personal perspective because there aren't that many physicists who share my interest in this subject, so I would like to explain how this started. It goes back to my schooldays. I was at a boarding school called Harrow and, when I was around fifteen, I was restricted to my room for a week for misbehaving. I won't go into details about my transgression! So, all I could do was read, and the three books I read all affected me profoundly. The first was *The ABC of Relativity Theory* by Bertrand Russell, and it got me fascinated with the problem with space and time. The second was *An Experiment with Time* by J. W. Dunne, in which he described his precognitive dreams and his theory for this, and this got me interested in psychical research. The third was *The Third Eye* by Lobsang Rampa, who claimed to be a Tibetan lama who had taken over the body of a Cornish fisherman. I'm skeptical of that claim now, but it got me interested in Buddhism and religious ideas.

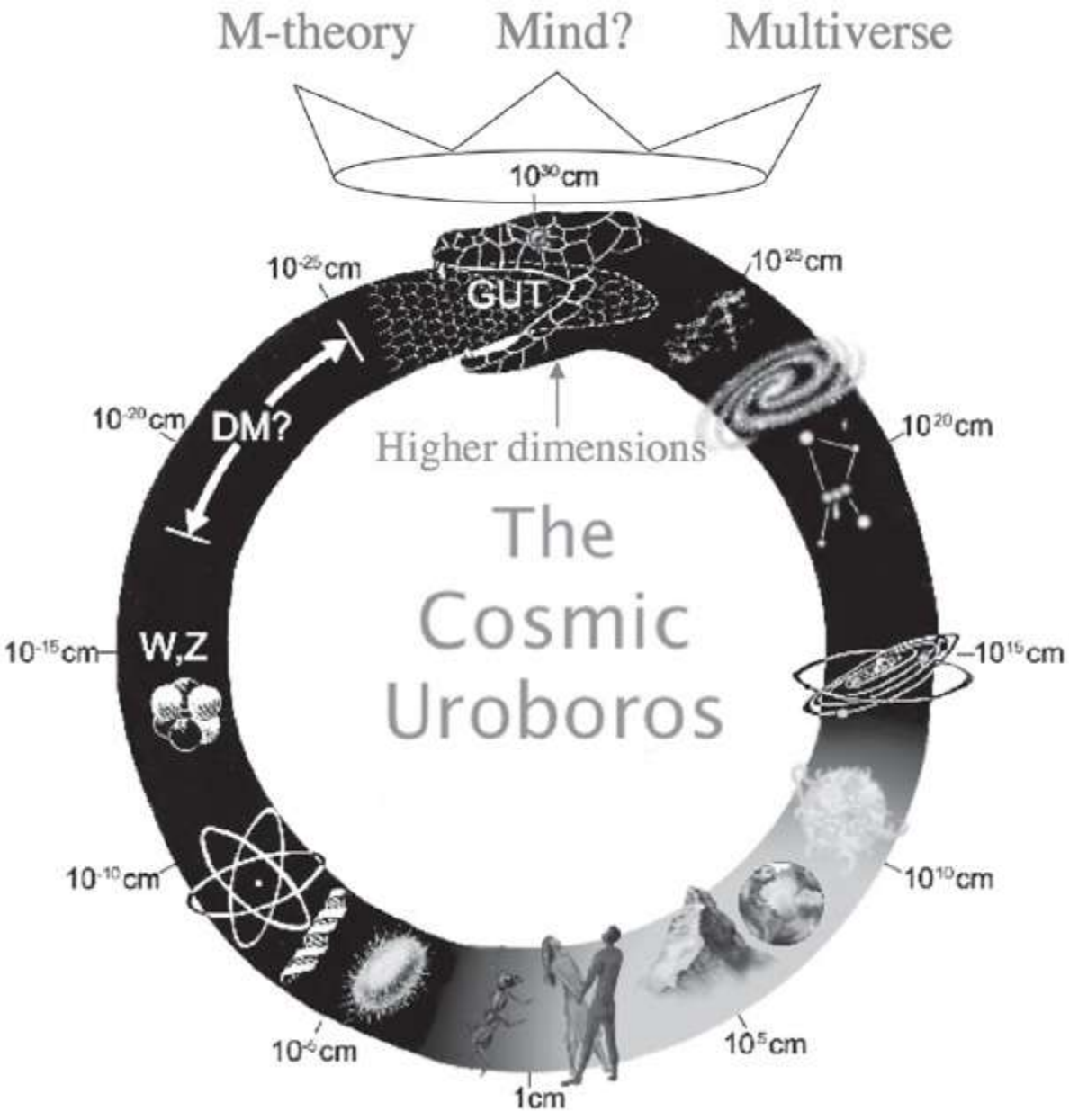
Those three books awakened in me three passions—for physics, psychical research, and mysticism—and when I went up to Cambridge University as an undergraduate, I immediately joined the CU Astronomical Society, the CU Society for Psychical Research, and the CU Buddhist Society. I acquired no experience in psychedelics but at least I took up meditation. When I graduated, I studied for a Ph.D. in cosmology with

Stephen Hawking and later became a professional astronomer, but I've always maintained my interest in psychical research and religious experience. So I suppose that's why I'm here today.

In order to explain why the topic of this meeting is relevant to physics, I will next give a nontechnical overview of the triumph of physics in coming to understand the world. I will do this by using the mindblowing image of the Cosmic Uroboros, the snake that swallows its tail. Around the body of the snake are the various structures that exist in the universe. At the bottom are humans and then, as we go to the right, we encounter progressively larger things: a mountain, the Earth, the sun, the solar system, the galaxy, and finally, at the top, the entire observable universe with a size of 10^{27} cm. As we go to the left, we encounter progressively smaller things: an ant, an amoeba, the DNA molecule, an atom, an atomic nucleus, and then the plethora of particles that emerge from particle physics, culminating in the Planck scale of 10^{-33} cm at the top. This is the smallest conceivable scale because space can no longer be regarded as a smooth continuum below that. So you can think of the Uroboros as a sort of ruler: as you go from the top in an anticlockwise direction, the scale increases by a factor of ten for each minute. There are sixty decades of scale in total, so it is a sort of cosmic clock.

Using this image, you can think of the history of physics as the expansion of our awareness to ever larger and smaller scales, so I want to summarize this history by taking you on a journey. On the outward journey, we've expanded our awareness to ever larger scales using telescopes, et cetera. So we started with the geocentric view [of Plato] with the Earth at the center of the universe, and then moved to the heliocentric view [of Copernicus], with the sun at the center. But Galileo realized that the sun is just one of numerous stars that make up the Milky Way, so soon we progressed to the galactocentric view, in which our galaxy is the entire universe. Then early in the twentieth century, it was realized that there are numerous other galaxies outside the Milky Way, and it is now known that there are a hundred billion of them within the visible universe. Furthermore, all the galaxies are moving away from each other, because space itself is expanding, and this means that the universe began with a big bang about fourteen billion years ago. So today most people adopt the cosmocentric view in which we can only see to the distance traveled by light since the big

bang. However, some theorists believe the visible universe is only one of many universes, termed the multiverse, and there was a reference to this yesterday. In fact, I wrote a book about the multiverse a few years ago, so you should definitely take the concept seriously.



The Cosmic Uroboros. Credit: Bernard Carr.

[audience laughter]

On the inward journey, we've expanded our awareness to ever smaller scales using both microscopes to probe organisms too small to be seen with the naked eye and physics experiments of various kinds to probe inanimate matter. The notion that matter comprises atoms goes back to the ancient Greeks but only gained scientific support with the development of chemistry in the eighteenth century, statistical physics in the nineteenth century, and nuclear physics in the twentieth century. Subsequently, accelerators with increasing energy have been used to probe ever smaller subatomic scales, these corresponding to particles of increasing mass. Currently we have the standard model of particle physics, which was confirmed a few years ago with the discovery at CERN of the Higgs particle, sometimes called the god particle. However, that's not the end of the story because, on still smaller scales, there may be something called supersymmetry and finally, on the Planck scale, we encounter M-theory, which purports to be the final Theory of Everything.

The inward journey has also revealed the various forces that operate in the universe, these linking the microscopic domain (on the left) with the macroscopic domain (on the right). For example, the electric force that holds the electron in orbit around the proton is the same force that holds solid objects together. The weak and strong forces that hold nuclei together and are responsible for radioactive decay also regulate the generation of nuclear energy in stars. At still smaller scales, one encounters other particle physics interactions that may be responsible for the fluctuations in the early universe that gave rise to galaxies. The fact that the snake is swallowing its own tail corresponds to the big bang. Because of the finite speed of light, if you observe an object at a great distance, you're seeing it as it was in the past. But the universe was smaller in the past, and if you look back fourteen billion years, the region we observe today was infinitesimally tiny. That's why the very large meets the very small at the top of the Uroboros. So in some sense, the big bang is the culmination of the macro-micro connection. What happens there, where quantum foam meets the cosmos and M-theory meets the multiverse, is still uncertain, but in some sense everything emerged from the quantum vacuum.

The history of physics has also taught us that the forces of nature—which seem very different at laboratory energies—can be unified and this corresponds to a vertical connection in the Uroboros. For example, we know that the electric and magnetic forces are unified as part of the

electromagnetic force. The weak and the electromagnetic forces are merged as the electroweak force, that was verified experimentally by the discovery of the W and Z particles at CERN in the 1970s. The strong force is unified with electroweak with what is called Grand Unified Theory (GUT). The final challenge is to merge gravity with the other forces and the current favored theory is M-theory (mentioned above).

The progress of physics has also changed our view of the nature of reality in various ways. The outward journey has changed our view of space and time. The commonsense view is that space is three-dimensional [since you can travel left/right, up/down, and forward/backward], and this is the arena of physics in Newton's worldview. There is also time, as measured by clocks, although the clock on my slide is wrong.

[audience laughs]

In Newton's perspective, both space and time were absolute, in the sense that they are measured in the same way by all observers. But at the beginning of the twentieth century Einstein realized the arena of physical reality is four-dimensional, space and time being merged into spacetime. Each observer has their own worldline and their own time axis as they move from past to future along that worldline. Observers can move relative to each other, so that they have different space and time axes, but special relativity consistently reconciles everyone's description of the world. Later, with general relativity theory, Einstein gave a geometrical interpretation of gravity by showing that the spacetime is curved.

The inward journey has changed our view of reality in an even more radical way with the discovery in the early twentieth century of quantum theory. I will be saying more about this later but the important point is that, although relativity theory describes the macroscopic world and quantum theory describes the macroscopic world with great precision, they are incompatible. This is because quantum theory entails what is called the Uncertainty Principle, which says you cannot measure both the position and speed of an object simultaneously. For example, the process of looking at an object to determine its position changes its speed. But this is clearly incompatible with the relativistic concept of a worldline because the

velocity of a particle is just the angle of its worldline relative to the observer.

The other strange feature of quantum theory is that a system is in a superposition of states described by a wave function until an observation collapses the wave function into a particular state. So if I toss a coin, it's in a superposition of heads or tails until I look at it. This is the basis of the famous Schrödinger's cat experiment, in which a cat in a box with a vial of poison is simultaneously alive and dead until the box is opened. [Shows image of cat "wanted dead or alive." Audience laughs.] This reminds me of a joke from Woody Allen: A guy goes to the psychiatrist and says, "Doc, my brother is crazy. He thinks he's a chicken." I think you're fond of chickens too, Ralph.

[audience laughs]

The doctor says, "Well, why don't you turn him in," and the guy says, "I would but I need the eggs."

[audience laughs]

Quantum theory is like that. It's crazy but we need it because it works with great precision.

Another mind-blowing idea that comes from high energy physics is the notion of extra dimensions. This idea was introduced by Theodor Kaluza and Oskar Klein in the 1920s. They wanted to unify gravity and electromagnetism, giving them a geometrical interpretation in the same way that Einstein had given a geometrical interpretation to gravity. They achieved this by invoking an extra spatial dimension [i.e., a fifth dimension] but wrapped up on the Planck scale, so that it cannot be seen. It's hard to imagine five dimensions—or even four—but as an analogy you can imagine a firehose in which its length represents the four dimensions of spacetime and the circular cross section is the fifth. From a distance, the firehose looks like a line but when you go closer to it, you find it's got a cross section. This was a beautiful idea but physicists forgot about it until the 1980s, when superstring theory came along and required not just one

extra dimension but six of them, all wrapped up on the Planck scale, so that we live in a ten-dimensional space. There were actually several different versions of superstring theory, but then M-theory came along and amalgamated them by invoking yet another [eleventh] dimension.

So the progress of physics has entailed a sequence of paradigms with increasing dimensionality: Newton's three-dimensional model, Einstein's four-dimensional model, Kaluza-Klein's five-dimensional model, superstring's ten-dimensional model, and M-theory's elevendimensional model. Of course, it is hard to envisage all these dimensions, but I just want to convey the idea that this is now respectable (albeit unconfirmed) physics. One model that I particularly like postulates that the physical world [i.e., Einstein's spacetime] is like a four-dimensional *brane* in a five-dimensional *bulk,* and I'll return to that later.

JEFFREY KRIPAL: Bernard, please explain the bulk and the brane because I have absolutely no idea what you're talking about.

BERNARD CARR: Well, let's start with four-dimensional spacetime. If I suppress two of the spatial dimensions, I can represent this by a two-dimensional sheet [holds up a piece of paper]. So this corresponds to the brane, and the analogue of the bulk is the three-dimensional space in which the sheet is embedded. Since I've brought everything down by two dimensions, the three-dimensional space represents the five- dimensional bulk. The concept of extra dimensions may seem bizarre, because it's very different from our commonsense view of reality, but that's the price we pay for the triumph of unifying all the forces of nature. Things are not so easy to visualize.

Anyway that's the end of my description of physics and I hope that I've conveyed in a broad-brush way both its success and the way in which it entails a transformation in our commonsense view of reality. The Uroboros represents the triumph of physics in coming to understand the unity of the physical universe and the forces that operate in it. But there's also something missing in this picture. If we envisage a crown on the head of the Uroboros, with M-theory on the left and the multiverse on the right, there is a missing jewel (another M) in the middle. I wonder if anyone knows what it is.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Mind!

BERNARD CARR: Exactly. There is no reference to mind. So for those of you who meditate, it must be disconcerting to realize that the success of physics represents the triumph of mindlessness.

[audience laughs]

This is deeply puzzling because the big bang explains how ever more complex structures evolve during the history of the universe, and the human brain—which sits at the bottom of the Uroboros—represents the culmination of that complexity. It is certainly the most complex structure on this planet. Yet mainstream science suggests that the most striking attributes of a brain—mind and consciousness—play a purely passive role in the universe. Consciousness is alleged to be just the excretion of our neurons, allowing us to observe the universe but only like watching a movie. It follows that religion and spirituality and mystical insights are purely illusory.

In my opinion, this is a very unsatisfactory perspective but there's another problem with the mainstream view. How can physics claim to be close to a Theory of *Everything* when the unification is missing half of my world (i.e., what goes on inside my head when I dream and take DMT or whatever)? It's just a theory of particle physics, and I'd like to illustrate this point with a little story. David Luke mentioned that I did my Ph.D. with Stephen Hawking, and some of you may have seen the recent movie about him, *The Theory of Everything*. Because I was invited to the London premiere with Stephen and sat next to him, I was able to watch his reaction, and he clearly enjoyed it. (The character called Brian in the movie is a fusion of myself and another friend of Stephen.) But what struck me most about the movie was the irony of its title. Stephen spent most of his life seeking a Theory of Everything and yet the movie wasn't mainly about that at all. It was about his love affair with his first wife, Jane, which is precisely what the Theory of Everything isn't about.

[audience laughs]

So I imagined the next day's headlines: Stephen Hawking Finds the Theory of Everything . . . Enjoyable!

[audience laughs]

Since this is a meeting about psychedelics, I might mention that I came close to taking LSD when I was Stephen's Ph.D. student. I lived in the same house as the Hawking family when he visited Caltech in 1975 and (because he was already in a wheelchair) I would help him out at home, even sometimes babysitting his children. I had the opportunity to take LSD but was going to treat it as a scientific experiment, filming myself and carefully recording all my experiences: "I'm seeing strange colors and angels, et cetera." Unfortunately, it was announced at the time that the CIA had been giving LSD to soldiers and that some of them had gone crazy and started throwing themselves out of windows. Jane Hawking, very reasonably, pointed out that she already had her hands full looking after Stephen and couldn't face the prospect of his student flying through the window as well. So she told me that I couldn't stay in the house if I took LSD, and the experiment was abandoned.

Audience Member: It's never too late!

Bernard Carr: Maybe, but now let me get back to the problem of consciousness, which is so blatantly neglected by physics. Of course, this is a very vexed subject, because people have very different views about consciousness, and it might be useful to list some of the bones of contention. The first issue is whether consciousness is incidental or fundamental. On the one hand, John Watson, the founder of behaviorism, says, "The time seems to have come when psychology must discard all reference to consciousness, when it need no longer delude itself into thinking that it is making mental states the object of observation." The philosopher Daniel Dennett is even more provocative: "We're all zombies, nobody is conscious." On the other hand, Max Planck, one of the founders of quantum theory, said, "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness." And philosopher David Chalmers says,

“I propose that conscious experience be considered a fundamental feature, irreducible to anything more basic.”

Even if one accepts that consciousness is important, there is a controversy over where it comes from. On the one hand, we have the standard neuroscientific view of Francis Crick: “A person’s mental activities are entirely due to the behavior of nerve cells, glial cells, and the atoms, ions, and molecules that make up and influence them.” There is also the view of Marvin Minsky that “the brain is just a computer made of meat.” He died recently, so maybe he’s changed his mind. A contrasting view comes from the cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker: “How could consciousness possibly arise from the physical brain? Beats the heck out of me. I have some prejudices, but no idea of how to begin to look for a defensible answer. And neither does anyone else.” The theoretical biologist Stuart Kauffman offers a similar opinion: “Nobody has the faintest idea what consciousness is. I don’t have any idea. Nor does anybody else, including the philosophers of mind.” It’s very interesting to study the correlations between what goes on in the brain and conscious experience, but we don’t know how the brain actually generates consciousness.

Whatever one’s view of this issue, there is still the question of how consciousness relates to physics. Most physicists would assume that there is no relationship, but some disagree. John Wheeler claims that “mind and universe are complimentary,” while Eugene Wigner, a founder of quantum mechanics, attests that “it is not possible to formulate the laws of physics in a fully consistent way without reference to the consciousness of the observer.” Another quantum theorist, Bernard d’Espagnat, is equally forthright: “The doctrine that the world is made up of objects whose existence is independent of human consciousness turns out to be in conflict with quantum mechanics and with facts established by experiments.” Roger Penrose also argues for an extension of physics: “My position on consciousness demands a major revolution in physics. There is something very fundamental missing from the current science. Our understanding at this time is not adequate and we’re going to have to move to new regions of science.” The linguist Noam Chomsky, although a nonphysicist, agrees, anticipating that “physics must expand to explain mental experiences.”

Thus many great physicists believe that physics must expand to accommodate consciousness, and I’m one of those. I’m sorry—I don’t

mean that I'm a great physicist, just that I'm one of the people who shares that belief.

[audience laughs]

I've various reasons for this. One is related to the anthropic principle. I've no time to go into details, but this is based on the idea that there are unexplained tunings between the constants of physics that seem to be necessary in order that life can arise. So our presence as observers imposes a selection effect on how the universe appears. There are different interpretations of these tunings, but the most plausible from a physics perspective is the existence of a multiverse.

The second reason relates to quantum theory. I've already mentioned that the process of observation collapses the wave function of a system [e.g., a tossed coin]. So in some sense consciousness creates reality. As another example, we have seen how the universe starts with a big bang and then evolves systems of increasing complexity, culminating with observers who can look back at the big bang, thereby bringing the universe into existence. Not everyone believes that consciousness collapses the wave function but renowned physicist Henry Stapp does, and he even suggests that it can modify the way in which it collapses [i.e., the probability of the coin showing a head]. David Bohm claims there's an implicate order that underlies the explicit order of the world, while Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff invoke what they term "orchestrated objective reductionism" to explain how quantum effects in the brain associated with microtubules can produce consciousness. All these ideas suggest that the observer is a crucial part of the universe.

A third—more controversial—factor suggesting that consciousness must be part of physics comes from the existence of psychic phenomena, such as telepathy (a link between minds), clairvoyance (direct perception of the physical world by mind), and psychokinesis (an influence of mind on the physical world). There's no normal physical explanation for these phenomena, but if they are real, it implies there is a direct interaction between consciousness and the physical world. For example, if I focus on this glass and it starts floating into the air—I won't do it now because there's not time [audience laughs]—then physics needs to explain this.

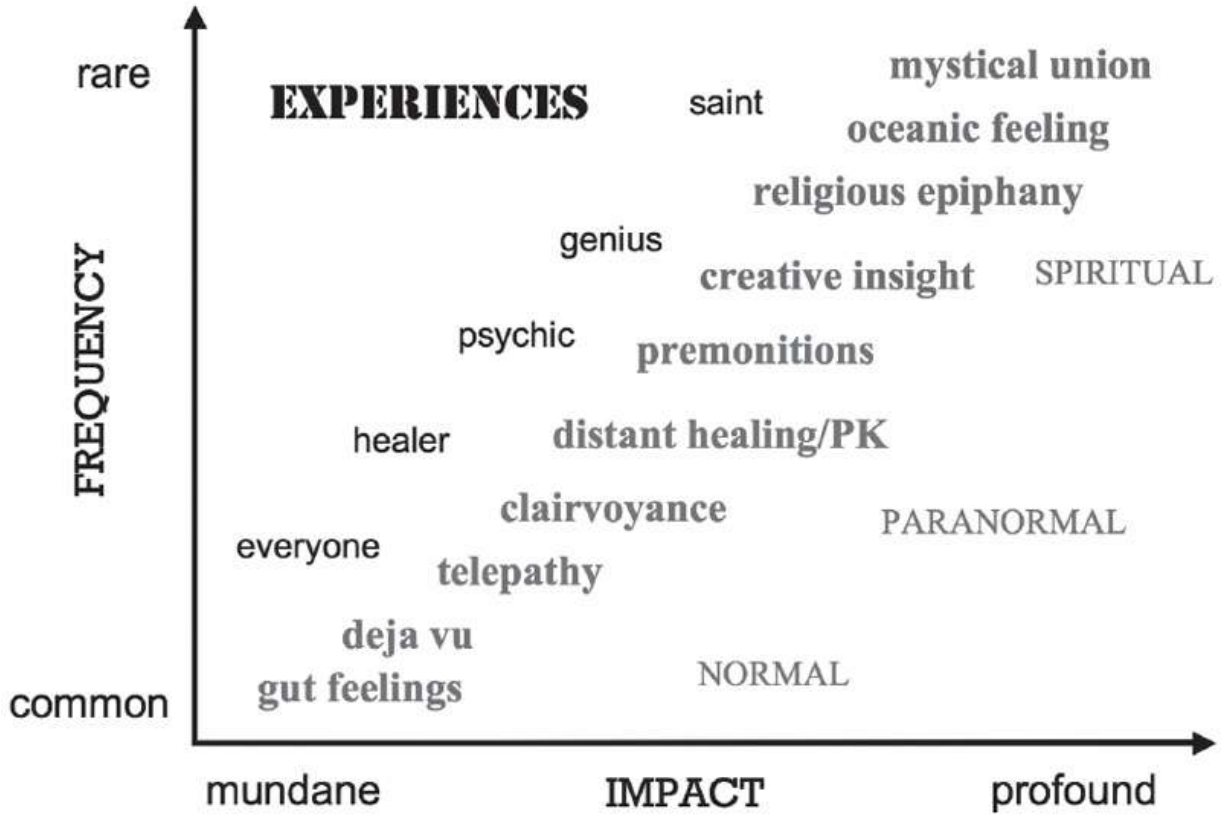
There are several other reasons why one might *want* to connect psi and physics. First, it will be good for psychical research because mainstream science will not accept psi until there is a theory that relates it to physics. Second, it's good for physics because physics has always thrived on anomalies. Usually the physics community starts off by disbelieving in the anomaly but later they may accept it, and then there's a paradigm shift and everyone's happy. Third, some people claim that physics is already exotic enough to explain psi. Certainly some of the topics I work on in my professional life—such as the multiverse, black holes, time machines, dark energy, dark matter, et cetera—are just as exotic as anything in paraphysics. Yet for some reason it's socially acceptable for me to work on those problems but not paraphysics.

So what sort of extension of physics would be required? I've mentioned that physics is based on two great theories—quantum theory, which describes the micro world, and relativity theory, which describes the macro world—but that these are incompatible. Any final theory must amalgamate them in some way, and so the question is whether the marriage of these two theories can accommodate mind. This is my own belief, and I'm going to argue that a key role is played by higher dimensions. However, before doing so, I want to stress another point: Psi involves not only interaction with the physical world but also experience—and often very intense experience. For example, telepathy often requires a strong emotional link between people; poltergeists and apparitions often involve psychological factors; and NDEs and OBEs involve experience by definition. So if you're going to have a theory for them, it has to relate to experience as well as experiment in some way.

I would like to expand on this issue because so-called psychic experiences are just part of a broader spectrum of experiences. One can make a graph [see here], plotting frequency of experience [common to rare] on the vertical axis and impact [mundane to profound] on the horizontal axis. At the bottom left we have the normal [common and mundane] experiences, like ordinary sensations, memories, and dreams. Moving up the diagonal to the right, we then have psychedelic experiences, shared by many numbers of people and probably everybody here. Moving further up the diagonal, we then have paranormal experiences [telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, premonitions]. Finally, toward the top right we have transpersonal experiences [rare but profound] like creative insight, religious

epiphany, oceanic feeling, mystical union, et cetera. Everybody has the experiences at the bottom, whereas psychics are relatively rare and geniuses and saints even rarer. It is simplistic to divide experiences like this because the classifications clearly overlap. For example, many psychedelic experiences are also spiritual. But I'm just trying to get across the idea that there's a huge range of experiences and we need our extended physics to accommodate *all* of these.

To summarize, we need to make a bridge between matter and mind, experiment and experience, and science and spirituality, and psi and psychedelics are a crucial part of that bridge. Being on a bridge is not always pleasant because you tend to be attacked by people from both sides. For example, parapsychologists are criticized by scientists for being too spiritual and by spiritual people for being too scientific. I suspect psychedelic researchers are in the same position.



Frequency versus impact of anomalous experiences. Credit: Bernard Carr.

Since Jeff Kripal is in the audience, I want to stress that a key role in building this bridge has been played by the Esalen Institute in California [of which Jeff is director]. In particular, its Center for Theory and Research has been running a seminar called Sursem for many years. This program was initiated by Michael Murphy and at one stage funded by John Cleese. Its purpose is cogently expressed in the following mission statement: "We think it requires astonishing hubris to dismiss *en mass* the collective wisdom experience of a large proportion of our forebears, including persons widely recognized as pillars of all human civilization, and we believe that the single most important task confronting all of modernity is that of meaningful reconciliation of science and religion." So the group—which includes people like Henry Stapp, Ed Kelly, Charles Tart, Greg Shaw, and Bruce Greyson—seeks "a middle way between polarized fundamentalisms of science and religion, an enlarged conception of nature anchored in science and including spiritual realities." I was privileged to be part of this group for four years. They produced two important books: *Irreducible Mind,* which collates evidence for rogue phenomena that go beyond the normal scientific paradigm; and *Beyond Physicalism,* which describes theoretical attempts to accommodate such phenomena and includes a chapter from myself titled "Hyperspatial Models of Matter and Mind."

Next I want to address the question of what sort of expansion of physics is required to accommodate these phenomena. Various approaches have been advocated. The first invokes signaling models, the idea that something like a radio wave can transmit psychic information between brains and between the environment and a brain. But it's unclear how the information is encoded or what organ in the brain can act as a receiver. The second approach involves biophysical fields, but these are primarily invoked to explain certain phenomena and it's not clear that there is independent physical evidence for these fields.

The third—and most popular—model invokes quantum theory. According to Evans Harris Walker, "this must lie at the heart of the solution to the problem of psi phenomena and indeed an understanding of psi phenomena and of consciousness must provide the basis of an improved understanding of quantum physics." One often-invoked quantum phenomenon is *entanglement*. When two particles are separated, they can be entangled in the sense that measuring the state of one particle instantaneously affects the state of the other one, even though this seems to

violate special relativity. So in some sense space is transcended, a feature termed nonlocality. Some people therefore suggest that psi is an experiential glimpse of the holistic fabric of reality. In particular, in his book *The Entangled Mind,* Dean Radin suggests, "Minds are entangled with the universe, so in principle they can nonlocally influence everything, including a collection of other minds or physical systems." Henry Stapp also takes this view: "The new physics presents *prima facie* evidence that our human thoughts are linked to nature by nonlocal connections: what a person chooses to do in one region seems immediately to affect what is true elsewhere in the universe." So does William Braud: "It may be that our deep interconnectedness with each other and with all of nature is the major conclusion that issues forth from the many findings of consciousness research."

The notion of a nonlocal mind is also relevant to mystical experience. W. B. Yeats wrote, "The orders of our minds are ever shifting, and many minds can flow into one another and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy. The borders of our memories are shifting and our memories are part of one great memory." This suggests that individual minds are connected as part of a Universal Mind, as advocated by Ralph Waldo Emerson: "There is one mind common to all individual men, a Universal Mind"; Erwin Schrödinger: "There is obviously only one alternative, namely the unification of minds or consciousness. In truth there is only one mind. To divide or multiply consciousness is something meaningless"; and David Bohm: "Deep down the consciousness of mankind is one. This is a virtual certainty and if we don't see this it's because we are blinding ourselves to it." These arguments are cogently described in the book *One Mind* by Larry Dossey, which is also the source of some of these quotations.

The implication of all this is that the brain is a *filter* rather than generator of consciousness, a view advocated by Aldous Huxley: "Each one of us is potentially Mind at Large. But in so far as we are animals, our business at all costs is to survive. To make biological survival possible, Mind at Large has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet." This is not the view of most neuroscientists but the idea that consciousness is channeled through the brain may be supported by

the claim that our awareness can expand when the brain is incapacitated in some way [e.g., in a near-death experience].

Although some of these arguments invoke the nonlocality of quantum theory, I don't believe that quantum theory alone can explain these phenomena. After all, no one understands quantum theory anyway.

[audience laughs]

So saying that it explains mental phenomena is just replacing one mystery with another one. Quantum theory certainly hints that mind plays a role in the universe but it makes no direct reference to experience, so we must seek a deeper theory that underlies both quantum theory and mind. We need a new paradigm—a sort of Grand Unified Theory of matter and mind—that incorporates consciousness and the transcendence of space and time in some radically new way.

This brings me to the fourth approach, which is sometimes termed the hyperspatial model. I mentioned in my initial overview of physics the possibility of extra dimensions, and I will now argue that these dimensions may also be relevant to mental phenomena. However, before continuing, I should stress that the picture I am about to describe is my own view and not one most physicists would share. Indeed, some might want to burn me as a heretic for even mentioning such ideas.

I can motivate my approach as follows: space and time were amalgamated by relativity theory, while matter and the process of observation were amalgamated by quantum theory. So now we want to amalgamate all of them in a unification of matter, mind, space, and time, even though this may require a revision of what we mean by those terms. In particular, I will claim that we need a space and time for mind (hence my title) that is different from normal space and time. It is what I call a Universal Structure and might be regarded as a higher dimensional reality structure that accommodates normal, paranormal, and transpersonal mental phenomena. The inclusion of the first is important because even accommodating *normal* mind [i.e., understanding ordinary sensory perception] is a big problem from a philosophical perspective.

So let us first consider the relationship between physical space and phenomenal space in the context of ordinary perception and examine how this bears upon the nature of reality. If someone looks at a cat, the conventional view is that there is the physical world that contains the cat and the brain and the light rays that travel from the cat to the brain via the eyes. So the perceived cat is inside the brain and just a projection of reality rather than reality itself. If two people look at the cat, there are two perceived cats, so the reality of the outside world is reflected in the consistency of how they are perceived. More generally, a Newtonian physicist would say that there is a three-dimensional space in which are localized the physical objects, the sensors through which we observe those objects, and the signals that connect them. Each observer has only partial information about this space, because they only see a two- dimensional projection of it, but there exists a three-dimensional configuration that predicts all the projections in a way that is concordant with what is actually observed. So reality is a three-dimensional structure that consistently reconciles our perceptions of it.

We now know that this picture is wrong because Einstein taught us that the world is four-dimensional, with both the cat and observer having worldlines and light traveling along light cones. The perceived cat is where its worldline intersects the past light cone of the observer, while the actual cat is where it intersects the current spatial hypersurface of the observer. In Newton's picture, a three-dimensional object generates a two-dimensional percept; in Einstein's picture, a four-dimensional object gives a three-dimensional object and a three-dimensional percept. This is a profound adjustment of how we view perception because it means that it is a four-dimensional process, with the object and percept just being two ends of a causal chain.

More generally, from a four-dimensional perspective, phenomenal space is just the part of spacetime that is connected to the brain by a nexus of signaling worldlines. Of course, this signaling does not only involve light rays. It also involves sound waves and other sensory channels and higher-order cognitive processing that goes on in our brain. But all of these processes (including neuronal ones) correspond to causal connections in spacetime. With this perspective, perceptual space is just the part of spacetime linked to the brain by the nexus of signaling connections, this corresponding to what Rupert Sheldrake would call the extended mind. The

percept is not in the brain, because perception is a four-dimensional process, but in spacetime itself. This also has implications for memory images, because if the perceived cat is in spacetime, so must the memory image be. So the brain must contain a tag rather than a trace.

Now this is just a description of physical perception, so can we extend this approach to nonphysical [i.e., mental] percepts? The most obvious example concerns dream space. This is clearly not the same as waking space but it looks so similar that one may sometimes be uncertain whether one is awake or dreaming. I will now argue that many other mental experiences—including psychic ones—involve a space. For example, consider threshold experiences on the border of waking and sleep, as described in the book *The Terror That Comes in the Night* by David Hufford. As you're falling asleep, you hear footsteps or see someone by the bed or feel something on your chest. Even if the source of these sensations is not physical, they may still exist in some other space. Similarly with apparitions, there's no doubt that people see ghosts and these are normally dismissed as hallucinations. But there are also collective cases where more than one person sees the ghost at the same time, and I believe there are also cases of shared visions in psychedelic research. So the apparition seems to exist in a space of its own even though it's not physical space. Out-of-body experiences seem to involve a space and—although this is subtly different from physical space—the fact that people having OBEs sometimes seem to acquire information from distant places, or might even be seen there, suggests that it does have some link with physical space. The same applies for near-death experiences, although these may also involve other spatial features [such as the tunnel effect and nonphysical realms]. Finally, certain extrovertive mystical experiences seem to involve a space.

To summarize, we seem to need a space that is not the same as physical space but relates to it and somehow amalgamates it with all these other spaces: phenomenal space, memory space, dream space, apparition space, NDE space, et cetera. The crucial implication of psi is that this space is *communal* and not just private. For if you visualize a cat and I can "see" it [telepathy], this suggests that it resides in some collective mental space; and if my mind can directly see the physical world (clairvoyance), this suggests that this collective mental space also contains physical space. To quote the theosophist Paul Brunton, "We must learn to mentalize space and spatialize mind." In my approach, one explains this by assuming that the collective

space is higher-dimensional space. Just as a four-dimensional reality structure reconciles our different perceptions of the physical world in Einstein's model, so one needs a higher-dimensional reality structure [i.e., a Universal Structure] to reconcile our different experiences in the mental world, with our different perceptual worlds just corresponding to different projections of this structure.

In this picture the physical world itself is just a slice of the higher-dimensional space, which is reminiscent of the brane-bulk model described at the start of my talk. Most physicists will obviously reject this connection but consider the following question: If the physical world is a four-dimensional brane in a five-dimensional bulk, what else resides in this bulk? Since the only nonphysical experiences are mental, is it so outrageous to suggest that they reside there? But the unsettling aspect of this suggestion from a physicalistic perspective is that it suggests that there is a hierarchy of realities and not just a material one.

Finally, you might ask, What are these higher dimensions and how does one experience them? In my approach they correspond to higher times. In this context, I should stress that my four-dimensional description of physical perception [above] was not the full story because it omits a crucial aspect of conscious experience: the passage of time. This is not described by the block universe model of special relativity and I argue that it requires an extra dimension, associated with *mental* time. This notion was first advocated by the philosopher C. D. Broad and suggests that a complete description of physical perception requires a five-dimensional model. However, my model goes beyond this and advocates a hierarchy of times, corresponding to a hierarchy of levels of consciousness. But that's as far as I can go for now, so you will need to ask about this in the discussion. For now, let me conclude by suggesting that it is higher dimensions of space and time that provide the necessary bridge between matter and mind and that relate individual mind to Universal Mind.

DISCUSSION OF

Making Space and Time for Mind and Psychedelia

Michael Winkelman: The easy problem is how the brain produces a certain sort of neural discharge, the hard problem is how we experience it. In my opinion, this relates to the *meaning* we attribute to the physiological impulses we receive. So how does this relate to your unification? Has the role of meaning ever been explored within the context of physicists' efforts to link these different phenomena? From the point of view of social scientists, ultimately it's all about the meaning we attribute to what we experience.

Bernard Carr: Mainstream physics doesn't usually talk about meaning, so the question is whether the sort of extended physics I'm proposing does. Actually, whether one should even call this physics is controversial. I prefer to call it hyperphysics because it's not standard physics but an extension of physics, adopting a similar mathematical approach. So you're asking how meaning can enter this picture. I believe there is a connection, although I've not thought this through carefully. The point is that I've just focused on visual phenomenal space and there are many other [nonvisual] ways of experiencing reality. For example, a bat would experience the world in terms of frequencies. So I prefer to regard the Universal Structure as a sort of information space and information begins to make contact with meaning. Another member of the Sursem group, Adam Crabtree, is very interested in the question of information, as reflected in the work of the philosopher C. S. Peirce. On the other hand, I'm not claiming that everything about experience can be explained by this sort of hyperphysicalist approach. For example, most people would be very skeptical of the claim that all aspects of mystical experience can be reduced to physics. So I don't know whether meaning is going to be part of the picture at the end of the day but I hope so. I'm just saying you should try and expand this approach as much as possible. So I've not answered your problem but I've acknowledged its importance.

Chris Bache: Does part of your understanding of hyperdimensional time include the possibility that there are different modalities of time coexisting in the universe?

Carr: Yes, I missed that part of my talk, so thanks for asking about this. The point is that consciousness comes in as discrete packages, called the specious present, and represents the minimal timescale of experience. For a

human this is around a tenth of a second, so we cannot be aware of time scales much less than that. For example, if you consider a light moving in a circle, you don't see it as a moving light if it goes round more than ten times a second. Instead you see it as a continuous circle because your temporal resolution exceeds the time it takes to go round. So in some sense, conscious time ceases to exist below a tenth of a second. Likewise, it ceases to exist on too long a period, because if the light went round too slowly you wouldn't experience its motion either. The upper limit is not defined so precisely, but it is probably associated with the short-term memory time scale.

But if our conscious experience spans such a narrow range of time scales, why should there not be levels of consciousness in the universe with a very different specious present? Maybe computers have a specious present of a nanosecond and maybe there are intelligences in the galaxy with a specious present of a million years. Consciousnesses with a very different specious present might not be aware of each other or able to communicate, but I don't see why they couldn't exist. Indeed, it seems very arrogant to assume that ours is the only type of consciousness in the universe. Just as we see only the small fraction of electromagnetic radiation with wavelength in the visible range, maybe we only experience a small fraction of the possible spectrum of consciousness. My own hunch, based on accounts reported in the literature, is that the specious present can vary even for humans and in very dramatic ways in certain psychic or mystical experiences. For example, if you have a near-death experience, your whole life may be seen in an instant. And in some mystical states, it is claimed that the whole history of the universe may appear in an instant. At the opposite extreme, it is claimed that specious present can be so contracted that the present moment is infinitesimally short. Ed Kelly points out a similarity between the description of mystical experiences produced through the stages of *samādhi* characterized by Patañjali and an early anatomist twisting the focus knob on his microscope: "It's as though the meditator is adjusting the focal length of his hyperphysical sensors and encountering systematically different worlds depending on the settings achieved." These states are described by I. K. Taimni in *The Science of Yoga*.

So to answer your question more precisely, I argue that there is a hierarchy of levels of consciousness in the universe, each with a different specious present and with the specious presents being associated with the

compactified extra dimensions. So when I hinted that the extra dimensions may be related to time, that's what I meant. Of course, this notion is very speculative—no M-theorist would take it seriously—but it illustrates how one might, in principle, connect physics with consciousness.

DENNIS MCKENNA: That is a fascinating idea that you're talking about, that the specious present also relates to the consciousness of other organisms, because it seems that an organism's perception of time is related to metabolism. A thousand-year-old redwood tree, for example, has a much slower metabolism than us, so it would have an expanded sense of time in which a thousand years is nothing. Similarly a mouse or a shrew would have a much faster metabolism, so this may help to elucidate the differences in consciousness for different species. The idea of plant intelligence was dismissed a few years ago but is now looking increasingly likely. This has to do with how plants experience time because of their metabolic rates, so maybe that fits into your picture.

But the question I'm dying to ask you—and maybe this betrays my ignorance of physics—concerns the remark in the early part of your talk that the brain is the most complex structure that we know of in the universe. I wonder if the following is a useful analogy. We know from black hole physics [though this is only a layman's understanding] that if you stuff enough mass into a small enough region, you get a black hole. You reach a point where space closes up on itself and forms a singularity. However, we cannot say anything about the singularity because the laws of physics no longer apply there and the world may not even exist within that region. Is it a useful analogy to think that a biological system reaches a certain level of complexity, when you get enough complexity stuffed into a small enough region like the human brain, so that it becomes a singularity?

CARR: That's an interesting question because black holes have a direct connection with the sort of model I'm proposing. But when we talk about a singularity, this is predicted by classical relativity theory and we assume that it will be replaced by something more comprehensible in a final quantum gravity theory. So the term *singularity* indicates we don't know what happens *now* but that we may eventually. In connection with black holes, there's also great interest in current physics in what is called the information paradox and the holographic principle. There's no time to go

into these issues now but I think you're suggesting that when complexity gets too big, you get something analogous to a black hole and that this relates to the threshold of consciousness.

McKenna: Yeah, essentially, it defines a new physics that governs behavior.

Carr: The idea that consciousness arises when a physical system reaches a threshold of complexity [i.e., when it gets sufficiently complex to have some form of memory and be self-reflexive] has been suggested by Guilio Tononi. I'm not sure whether linking this with black holes and singularities will turn out to be useful but it's an interesting question. After all, the formation of a black hole represents a sort of phase transition and the singularity represents the fact that something new happens that we don't fully understand. So I quite like the idea that this is analogous to getting consciousness when you reach a sufficient complexity. It certainly makes sense to ask where on the evolutionary tree of life consciousness arises and whether there is a complexity threshold for consciousness. Alternatively, one might take the panpsychist view that consciousness is everywhere.

McKenna: Thank you.

Daniel Pinchbeck: I was just wondering about when people take psychedelics and have the experience of what feels like another dimension. That's a very strong experiential thing for me, so is it possible that psychedelics provide access to these higher dimensions?

Carr: Your question reminds me of a great paper by David Luke that I read just before coming to this meeting, "Rock Art or Rorschach: Is there More to Entoptics than Meets the Eye?" David argues that in experiences with DMT, and ayahuasca as well, people report having higher-dimensional experiences. Here are some other quotes from his article: "My own experience consuming DMT-containing substances and mixtures has provided me with a host of geometric visual phenomena of such exquisite complexity, seeming impossibility, and baffling multidimensionality that it seems difficult to believe that people perceiving entoptic phenomena following the ingestion of psychotropic substances are seeing the structure of their own brain" [Luke]. "There is an immense vividness to these interior

landscapes, as if information were being presented three dimensionally and deployed fourth dimensionally" [McKenna]. "At times, the geometric patterns may seem to defy ordinary real-world Euclidean geometry; some persons that I interviewed made reference to higher orders of spatial dimensionality" [Shannon]. "A small selection of these trip reports reveals a fairly consistent and frequent report of multidimensional geometric percepts under the influence of ayahuasca and DMT" [Luke]. So David is implying that these images aren't just generated by the brain but by something higher-dimensional outside the brain. If so, that's very exciting. It's all very well for a theorist to spout about higher dimensions, but what one needs is empirical evidence for this. So I'm very glad that you've asked this question because it relates theory to actual experience.

PINCHBECK: Do you have any idea of scientific protocol exploring that or mapping it out in more detail?

DAVID LUKE: I'm going to be talking about that tomorrow. But let me add that, in our recent LSD creative problem-solving study, we interviewed leading scientists, mathematicians, and engineers from top institutions. We even had a guy from CERN who had been working on the Higgs boson, and under the influence of LSD he said he could see gravitational waves. So, it kind of gave him an experiential approach to a very theoretical idea.

CARR: Oh right, it's great to know that I'm not the only crazy physicist!

CHAPTER 9

LSD and DMT Entity Relation

Chris M. Bache

The day I got the invitation to come to this conference, Christina came home and I said, “Hey, something interesting came in the mail today. I got a wonderful invitation to participate in a conference in England on DMT and entity encounters.” She said, “Yeah?” I said, “Yeah! There are two problems though. I haven’t done much DMT, and I don’t have entity encounters.”

So, this started a long process of first reading everything I could about DMT—I have done DMT some, and I’ve done ayahuasca, and I have had entity encounters, particularly with *Salvia divinorum* and in ayahuasca sessions. So, I’m comfortable with the idea of there being multiple levels of intelligence in the universe, and multiple entity forms and encapsulations of that intelligence. I’m really comfortable with that. But within what is my primary work, the LSD work I did from 1979 to 1999, the nature of that work has always been driving toward a fundamental singularity of consciousness, and it’s not that this singularity of consciousness disqualifies or trivializes entities, but it has a different texture. So, it’s led me to think about, How do I address this question of why there are so many entity encounters in the DMT context and so few entity encounters in the way that I have worked with LSD? I think it’s not simply the nature of the chemical itself; it’s partly how the chemical is used, not just the psychoactive properties of the chemicals, but the therapeutic modality in which it’s being used.

I don't want to speak to you about theory today; instead, I'd like to bring my experience to bear on this question. This conference comes at a specific juncture in my life. I'm in the very end stage of writing an autobiographical book in which I'm trying to present the entirety of a twenty-year psychedelic journey. I've been working on it for three years, meditating on it for twenty-some-plus years.

What I'd like to do today is to simply take you through and try to summarize the trajectory of my experiences. I was so excited to listen to Bernard Carr this morning; I'm still kind of buzzing from his talk, because I've had so many experiences having to do with modalities of time and I have not heard a physicist address the possibility of those experiences like Bernard did this morning.

But to tell you about the book, first, let me give some quick points on methodology. All of you know the distinction between psycholytic therapy and psychedelic therapy: psycholytic, low-dose therapy, and psychedelic, high-dose therapy. All my work, after three preliminary sessions at 250 mcg, was done at high-dose levels, between 500 to 600 mcg. At first, I thought I was just doing an extended course of psychedelic therapy. In the Spring Grove program, they limited psychedelic sessions to one to three sessions. The idea was to try to trigger an experience that approximated a near-death experience. They were not trying to do the long continuous unfolding that you did with psycholytic, or low-dose, therapy. What I found over time, however, was that I wasn't simply doing psychedelic therapy as I had at first thought. I found that what I had read about psychedelic therapy did not apply to what I was experiencing in my sessions. When you work with high doses for an *extended series of sessions* in a therapeutic modality where you're lying down with headphones, eyeshades—the whole works—it opens up possibilities and creates challenges that don't show up when you're only doing one or two sessions.

So, I came to call this protocol psychedelic exploration. If you could help me think of a better term, I would be open to it. The book is not published yet, but that's what I'm calling it now. It's a different protocol than psychedelic therapy because of the number of sessions involved.

Working with doses that high is very demanding, very unorthodox, and it may not be recommended. Ralph Metzner, in his wonderful book *Allies for Awakening,* recommends against taking doses of LSD this high. He says

it can be overwhelming. It tends to produce dissociated states and dysphoria. You get overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience; you can't manage it. And I think this may be good advice. I think it's wise advice particularly if you're working at a clinical level. If you're working to heal the personal psyche, there's no need to shake up the system that hard and that severely. But I'm not a clinician, and I wasn't really trying to heal myself. I was trained as a philosopher, and I wanted to explore the universe as deeply as I could. So I chose to work with higher doses. But doing this brings certain challenges.

The first challenge is the challenge of recall. When you go into new territory, you will lose some of those experiences; you won't be able to bring them back in their entirety; they'll be gaps in your notes. But I found that by going back to this same territory in the next session and the next session, these gaps began to be filled in. I could bring back more of the experiences. You have to literally train your mind to be able to stay cognitively coherent in new modalities of experience, new modalities of consciousness.

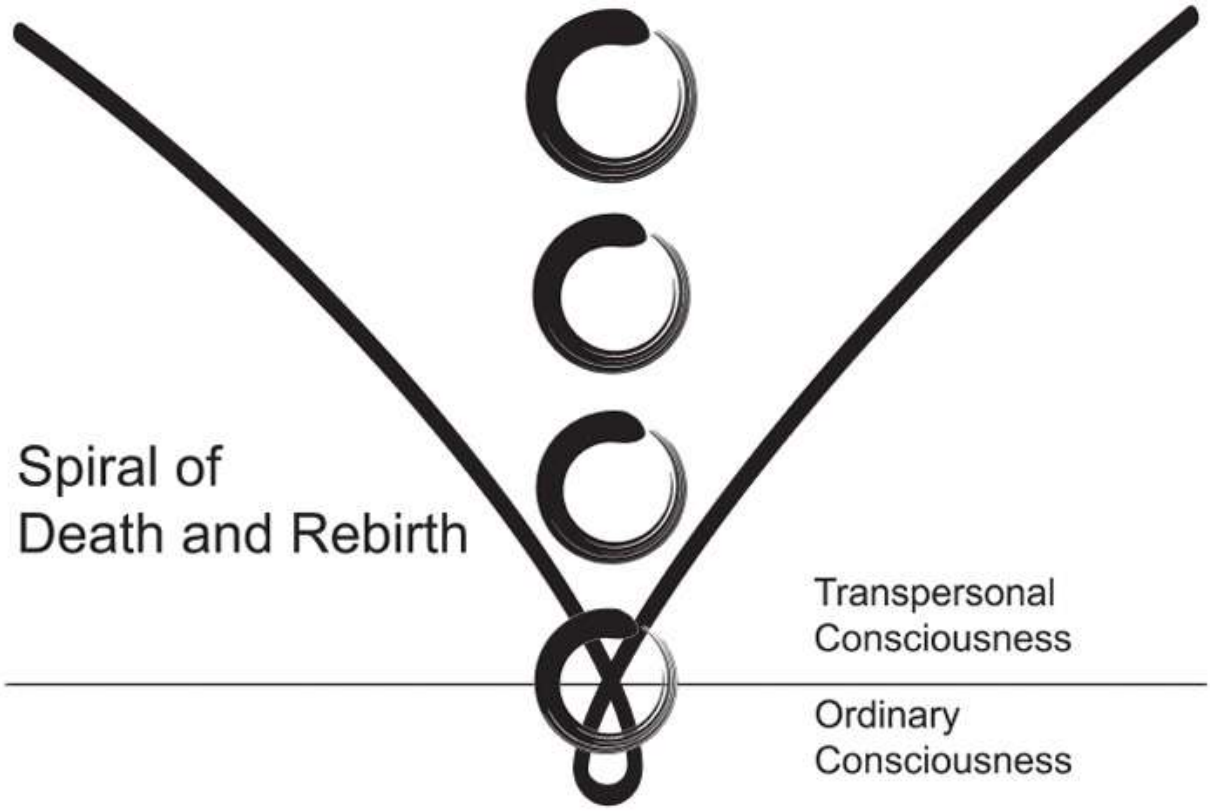
I want to emphasize that I approached this project as a philosopher, with the rigor that I had internalized first as a historian, then as a philosopher. I tried to standardize as many variables as possible. The sitter for all of my sessions was the same. The sessions always started at the same time of day. I was always isolated. I've never taken psychedelics and gone to a concert or gone for a walk in the woods. My work has been seventy-three high-dose sessions conducted in a highly standardized, therapeutically focused environment. I kept methodical track of where I went. If individual sessions are hard to conceptualize, multiple sessions are even harder to conceptualize because there's a trajectory of learning that takes place across those sessions.

I'm not trying to tell a personal story in this book. I'm really trying to look at the deeper cosmological and philosophical story that emerged in my sessions. I found that personal experiences tended to take place at the beginning and end of a session. For the most part, when the session was at its peak, I was operating beyond the limits of personal consciousness. There were personal healings, of course, but after the first five or ten sessions, I was usually operating outside personal consciousness during the peak hours of a session.

I kept rigorous records, all the dates and circumstances. I even plotted the astrological variables. Once I began to understand astrology, I began to use astrology to choose the dates of my sessions. I was looking for the circumstances that had the greatest potential to be truly cathartic and have breakthrough potential. I also wanted to explore Stan Grof and Rick Tarnas's hypothesis that transits can be a predictor of the content of psychedelic sessions.

One goes through many iterations of death and rebirth on this journey, which raises some pretty interesting questions—multiple levels of death and rebirth in a succession of increasingly intimate conversations or communion with the universe [see here].

The first death and rebirth is, of course, ego death. It's a total destruction of your time-space identity, of your physical identity. But after one goes through ego death, when death returns in your sessions, you are not simply repeating ego death. I think you're experiencing deeper modalities of death that correspond to deeper dimensions of reality. I'm going to use the terms *psychic, subtle,* and *causal* to describe these dimensions, though there are other systems we could use. Death at these levels is not simply a repetition of ego death; it's a different kind of death. This became such a significant issue in my work that I've really spent some time thinking about the question, What is it that is dying in these later deaths? If you're interested in my thoughts on that, there's a paper posted on Academia.edu, "Death and Rebirth in LSD Psychotherapy," where one of the questions I'm asking is, What actually dies in these advanced levels of death and rebirth?



The spiral of death and rebirth, which shows multiple levels of death and rebirth cycles.

What I'd like to do now is go through the chapters in the book to give you a sense of where my journey went, beginning with "Crossing the Boundary of Birth and Death." If you know Stan Grof's work, this was classic perinatal territory: a lot of fetal sensations, confrontations with the existential limits of life, a lot of intense physical purification, perinatal seizures, convulsions, detoxification of the body, a hard physical workout. It was much more physically violent than I had anticipated, knowing Stan's work ahead of time. I thought perhaps it was because I was using such high doses, I'm not sure.

This perinatal process finally culminated in ego death, having your life turned inside out. It just snapped me like a twig, and it did it with exquisite ingenuity. I began the day as a white male, highly educated, obsessed with the meaning of life. My session took each one of these and reversed them. I became female; I became women of color. I became uninterested in philosophical questions, totally absorbed with the mundane conditions of

life, and everything was amplified by a hundred. I became hundreds of women that were the opposite of me. This was the universe's way of saying, in effect, "You think you're this? Watch this; I'm going to turn you into the opposite. Now what are you?" There's nothing wrong with being black, being a woman, or being uninterested in philosophy. What was wrong was the constriction those social and physical roles placed upon my consciousness. The message was, "Where you're going, those things do not apply. Let go and go beyond." So, I went through this deep surrender, and then after a transitional period, I entered what I came to call the ocean of suffering.

The perinatal ego-death process lasted about two and a half years. Then, session by session over two years and fourteen sessions, I was systematically taken deeper and deeper into an ocean of collective pain, rage, and suffering. It just overwhelmed me. You have to learn and practice how to experience suffering of this magnitude. Eventually I was taken into the very bowels of hell, worse than any of the religious descriptions of hell. And this took place over two years. It's interesting. I stopped my work in the middle of this sequence for a six-year period. So I did one year that took me into the ocean of suffering, stopped my work for six years, then started it again, and that session started *exactly* where the previous session had stopped six years before. Different time of life, different expectations, different astrology, and yet there was this absolute continuity. I just picked up the work where I had stopped, and it got worse and worse.

My experience has been that when you are working with high doses of LSD, the intentions you set for a session don't amount to very much. I got to a point in the ocean of suffering work where I was begging for it to stop, enough was enough. But it didn't stop, it just kept getting worse. This led me to the major theme of my second book, *Dark Night, Early Dawn,* which was trying to answer the question, Why this collective pain, why so much suffering? Stan Grof's theory is that collective suffering is drawn into a session because it resonates with ego death, and therefore it's drawn in by resonance to one's individual ego death. When ego death finishes, the collective suffering should disappear, because there's no ego death going on to anchor it.

My experience was that I'd already gone through ego death. This was a completely different modality of suffering. I eventually came to the

conclusion that this suffering wasn't aimed at my personal liberation at all. It wasn't trying to heal me or liberate; it wasn't a detoxification of my past in any way, shape, or form. It was aimed at healing nothing else than some dimension of the human collective unconscious. It was like the universe was using my sessions to detoxify the human species of some of the trauma of its history, of its wars, its murders, and its pain. As I've talked about this over the years, I have found more and more psychedelic explorers saying, "Yes, that jibes with my experience too." We think the universe is interested in our personal transformation, and it is, but the universe is equally interested, if not more interested, in the transformation of our species as a whole. And if you turn your sessions over to that, the universe will use them to accomplish its end. Right now, in our time in history, I think we are confronting powerful forces of historical transformation that are showing up in our sessions strongly.

The ocean of suffering was the content of the cleansing phase of this two years of work. The next two chapters of the book describe the ecstatic phase of these same two years. So in those first years of the ocean of suffering, when I moved through the pain and entered the ecstatic phase of the session, I entered Deep Time and the Soul. I experienced the whole of my life from beginning to end as a simultaneous, completed product. All of it. It was like looking at your life through a paper towel roll. Seen end to end, time collapsed, and I experienced the whole of my life. There was a tremendous saturation of detail. I experienced my life as it had been lived. I didn't experience myself being old in some fuzzy, amorphous sense. I experienced the distilled essence of all the moments of my life. It was such a strange state of consciousness, the first time I went into this state, I came back and couldn't remember it. It was the most meaningful experience of my life and it just disappeared.

It started coming to me in my dreams; it dropped in when I'd be listening to music. All of a sudden, my mind would open, and I'd catch another piece of it. The second time I went into this state, I remembered more, and the next time I remembered more still. Eventually, over four or five sessions, I learned how to stabilize my awareness in Deep Time. I learned how to stay awake and stay conscious and cognitively coherent inside deep time.

This is really important if you're a philosopher or you want to do any critical work with these states. You can train perception; you can train consciousness to operate in these conditions. And I want to mention in this context, with deep gassho to you, Bill Richards, that I think ineffability is overrated as a marker of mystical experience. Now it's true, and we've all had the experience, that our psychedelic experiences can overwhelm our linguistic capacity. But my experience is that if you keep going back, and if you press the edge multiple times, your ability to describe these states improves. You get clearer understanding of the complex weaving of experiences that are there.

I developed a certain technique for capturing my psychedelic experiences. First, always record the session within twenty-four hours. The morning after a high-dose session, your cognitive and verbal capacities are back but you're still porous around the edges. Then, second, what I would do is play the music of the session in exactly the order in which it had been played during the sessions. So, I'd play the passage, say, of the first hour of the session over and over again while I was writing up the account, getting back into the edge of the original state, until I was sure that I had captured all the experiences there. Then I'd put on the next piece of music and I'd do the same thing. I called it "standing at the edge of the well." And once I have a session recorded, I don't change it. I don't edit it. I've learned that if I try to improve the wording here or there, I might end up distorting something that was contained in the crudeness of the original language. Whenever I quote my sessions in my book, they're always italicized, because to me, they are my *Red Book* [of C. G. Jung]; they are the record of my core communion with the universe.

In the second year, after the six-year hiatus, I went through a jump far beyond personal reality in the ecstatic portion of the sessions. With no explanation given, I was taken on a series of initiations into the universe. This was a well-organized initiation; every session built upon the session that preceded it. I was taken deep into the beginnings of creation. I experienced creation as an act that resulted from two divine beings. One divine being stayed outside of time and space, the other divine being manifested *as* time and space, as the divinity that manifests the total totality of nirmanakaya, which we are now.

I had never anticipated that an extraordinary cosmic love lay at the fount of creation, but when I entered this experience, I was overwhelmed with the love these two beings had for each other. Another session took me on a cosmic tour. There was an intelligence. I couldn't see it, there were no images, but I was with an intelligence that was showing me the universe. It would take me somewhere and show me something, and I would see it and understand. And then it would take me somewhere else and show me something else. I often wished that I had a Ph.D. in physics and astronomy, because if I had, it could have shown me so much more. I would have been able to understand more. It was a philosopher's dream to be able to experience the universe so deeply.

Two sessions later I was being taken on another cosmic tour, but this time I stopped and I asked, "Who am I with? Who are you?" And I went through a kind of minideath and woke up in a deeper level of reality where I discovered that the consciousness that I had previously experienced as being "other" than me was actually a deeper level of Myself, with a capital *M*. Then the process repeated itself again, and again I asked, "Who am I with?" And every time I asked that—and this is relevant to entity encounters—I would die and wake up in a deeper reality and discover that I was in a deeper dimension of Myself. This went on for two hours. I kept dying and dying until eventually it became clear that in this reality there was no outside to my being. There was no outside because I was entering nondual causal reality; all of existence takes place within it. All perceptions of duality, all subject-object distinctions, are permutations taking place within the Great Expanse.

One of the things that began to happen in this period was that I began to be shown what I came to call the master story of humanity. I began to enter enormous expansions of time, far beyond the hundred years of my own lifetime. I began to be shown what appeared to be the larger story of the human race. We were being driven from within to an evolutionary threshold, a threshold of enormous evolutionary significance. That story continued to be a theme in my sessions that built over the next five years.

Eventually, when the ocean of suffering came to a final culmination, it threw me out into what I call the Greater Real, or into archetypal reality. For the next year and a half, I spent all my sessions exploring The Greater Real of Archetypal Reality. The ocean of suffering became the foundation

energetically for everything that happened in these years. I can't emphasize this enough. The death and rebirth that took place at this stage involved being immersed in liquid fire, white hot lava flows, being taken into the center of the sun and vaporized by the enormous heat. And yet, while being destroyed at one level, awareness opened at another level. I've learned that continuity of awareness does not mean continuity of self or continuity of ego, but there is continuity of awareness across enormous experiential jumps.

When I entered the Greater Real my humanity began to fall away from me. This was a deeper form of dying than ego death, because in ego death you lose your individual identity. But when your humanity falls away from you, you lose your human identity altogether. It's a deeper kind of death. I began to move into levels of realty that are beyond the collective consciousness. It was kind of like being in a space station orbiting the Earth, seeing everything from a higher perspective. It's a completely different dimension of consciousness, hyperclear. And there I encountered what people have called archetypes. But they weren't archetypes like Plato described them; they weren't eternal ideas in the mind of an unchanging God. They were dynamic living realities. They were in movement and they were vast. They weren't as small as Jung's archetypes—and Jung is one of my heroes. There was nothing as anthropomorphic as what Jung described. I encountered living beings so huge, so vast, that the closest my mind could come to giving them form was to see them as galaxies. Millions-of-light-years-across beings, and these were the beings that were responsible for generating time and space itself and the formative conditions within time and space.

Then, in subsequent sessions, I was brought a little bit lower into what I would call the low subtle level of reality. I think of archetypal beings as existing at the high subtle level of reality, and in the low subtle level I began to be taught all sorts of things about the collective tissue of humanity, both the collective body and the collective mind of humanity, in very precise detail. I began, for example, to have experiences of reincarnation not as an individual but as an entire species reincarnating, every hundred years an entire species moulting, all the cells of its human beings passing away and then producing a whole new generation. I had always thought of reincarnation in individual terms, as a lot of individual souls incarnating for their individual spiritual development. But here was the experience of an

entire species reincarnating as one, and the intelligence that had brought this reincarnating species into being was enormous. I was beginning to see that something was happening in history that was an expression of this intelligent collective pulse. There was something happening over the last several hundred years and in the hundred years coming that was a collective process, that all of our individual stories were connected to this collective story. I began to write about this in *Dark Night, Early Dawn,* where there is a chapter on collective karma, or going beyond the story of the soul.

It was out of these kinds of experiences that, eventually, I wrote my third book, *The Living Classroom*. I never talked to my students about my psychedelic work. I created a firewall around my work. Obviously, the provost does not like to hear that their professors of religious studies are doing massive doses of LSD on the weekends. Of course, consciousness doesn't respect those boundaries. Consciousness is consciousness, consciousness is fields, and fields reach out. I began to find that my students were being activated in my classroom in ways that seemed to move in rhythm with my psychedelic work. I began to find that there was a porosity developing between my mind and the minds of my students. In class I would reach for an example to illustrate some principle I was presenting—I would just create an example out of my imagination—but then found out that this example perfectly matched some recent experience of one of my students. This naturally touched them in a deep and significant way. This began slowly but eventually was happening regularly in my classes. Students also began to have unusually deep experiences around some of the concepts I was presenting in class. I was teaching world religions—presenting the perennial philosophy. We were talking about these ancient, widespread ideas, and my students began to have spontaneous experiences of these realities that seemed to be ignited not by the words but by the fact that, somehow, these experiences were now living inside of me because of my psychedelic work. And there was a contagion taking place. Fire was igniting fire.

I knew I was in trouble when one day I looked up and saw six students in a room of about thirty all quietly crying. Enormous forces were involved. Eventually I came to understand it wasn't simply a resonance between their world and my world. There was actually a field of collective energy in the room, a field created not just by the people who were in the room at the time, but by all the students who had ever taken this course with me at the

university. And these fields were getting stronger over time, and they were facilitating and accelerating a deeper learning in my classes that got stronger year by year, decade by decade. When I wrote *The Living Classroom,* I didn't mention psychedelics because psychedelics were not the main point. The point was the nature of consciousness itself. Anybody who works with a spiritual methodology where they go deep into the collective psyche can expect to trigger these kinds of resonant experiences in the lives of people around them.

The following year was a year that I called the Benediction of Blessings. It was a year of extraordinary blessings. If the ocean of suffering had been hard to endure, the Benediction of Blessings was one phenomenal blessing after another. At this point I entered what I would call causal reality. There were many experiences of Oneness and permutations of Oneness; experiences of the Fertile Void, where the entire physical universe suddenly began to be erased and dropped into an absolute formless void underneath it; and experiences of Cosmic Love.

At this point, I had a tremendous sense of closure in my work. I felt completely satisfied, like I had given something that I had been asked to give in the ocean of suffering, and the universe had rewarded me with more than I could possibly have imagined. I felt whole within myself. I had no idea what might happen next, but I wanted to find out. So I kept going. And what happened next is the Diamond Luminosity work. But first, let me back up just a bit.

One of the things that was so wonderful for me listening to Bernard Carr's talk today was his discussion of the hyperdimensionality of time. After entering Deep Time in the early sessions where I experienced my life as a completed whole, I kept going into deeper modalities of time in which I experienced large swaths of time that pertained to the human species—not timelessness, not going outside of time, that happened, but not here—this was a period of time like a hundred thousand years experienced as simultaneously present. And I was shown things and taught things about what's taking place over this long landscape of time.

Eventually, I gathered all of the visions of the master story that I had been given, organized them, and put them into a chapter describing my visionary experience of what's happening in history, of where humanity is going, of the crescendo that we're coming to. The chapter is called "The

Birth of the Future Human." I was doing this work in 1994 or 1995. In one of these sessions I was taken into Deep Time and into the core of the death and rebirth of the human species, which I experienced not as an individual human being but as the entire species.

Something about the work I had done allowed me to open up to some vast expanse of the collective psyche, so that when I experienced this death, it was a death that involved billions of people. I experienced a complete collapse of our civilization. It was like a hurricane sweeping across a Pacific island until everybody was just grabbing the closest thing they could hold onto, and for a time it looked like everyone was going to die. And then the storm passed, and there were survivors, and when they emerged they had been deeply changed. When they began to put their lives together, there was a new creativity present. They were different from the human beings who had gone into the crisis. There was a profound depth of communion with the divine that had not been present before, there was a depth of communion with the soul that had not been there before, and there was an intellectual cross-fermentation that had not been there before. It was like the whole human species was enlivened to a new level.

I began to see that this historical movement formed the context of my entire life. I began to understand that all of us are serving some role in this larger historical drama. I think that we all knew what we were getting into in this incarnation, that we all chose to be here, and that we are all active participants in bringing about the birth of the future human.

Where I went after the Benediction of Blessings was into a series of experiences that I call the Diamond Luminosity. Light shows up at many different levels in one's sessions. It's very common to experience light, and I had experienced light many times in many different places in my work. When I talk about the Diamond Luminosity, I'm not using a metaphor to describe this light. I'm trying to describe a particular *quality* of light, a hyperclear Light. Imagine a laser beam, hyperdense, hyperconcentrated, incredibly pure, and so refined it becomes impossibly clear. That's Diamond Luminosity. The closest thing I could find in the spiritual literature for it is the Buddhist discussion of *dharmakaya,* the "Clear Light of Absolute Reality," the light that opens when we die, when we have an opportunity to transcend all time and space and all the bardo echoes of time and space.

Over the next four years and twenty-five sessions, I entered this Diamond Luminosity four times, and only four times. It was happening every fifth or sixth session. In between these four sessions there was tremendous purification taking place, tremendous detoxification. My experience is that every time you move into a *deeper* level of reality, it is a *more intense level of energy*. If you're going to stabilize your consciousness at that level, you have to acclimate to its energy. If you just have glancing contact with it, you may not have to do so, but if you're going to *stabilize* your awareness there and become a citizen of that level of reality, you have to be able to function within that energy, and this takes enormous purification.

The second time I entered the Diamond Luminosity was the deepest I ever went in all of my sessions. I was in extra-samsaric reality, outside the bardo realms; I was in this hyperdiamond luminosity and in sheer joy. And then, late in the session, it did something that changed my entire philosophy of life. Everything pivoted 90 degrees, and I saw a reality in the far, far distance. And a light came out of that reality and hit me like a bolt of lightning. I called it the Absolute Light. It came from a reality that was as far beyond the Diamond Luminosity, as the Diamond Luminosity was beyond time and space. It completely shattered me, and that's when I began to realize that there is no end to this journey. It's an infinite progression. I used to think that sooner or later you would come to an endpoint. That you do all this work, and there is an end to it. Some call it Oneness with God. Stan Grof talked about the Fertile Void. But I had experienced Oneness with God many times. I had also experienced the Fertile Void and had discovered that there are many permutations of oneness. Even for the Fertile Void, though it sounds like a contradiction, there are levels within the Fertile Void. This experience taught me that the journey into existence is infinite. You stop when you simply can no longer endure the encounters. When you don't have the energy to keep going anymore.

What happened after that is, instead of going deeper into light, the light began to come deeper into me. It began to crunch itself deeper and deeper into my body, into my cellular structure. Eventually in my last session it penetrated even my eyes, changing how I perceive the world physically.

And then the Final Visions. My last two sessions were my goodbye visions. They were the universe saying goodbye. I didn't know we were

ending, but the universe was saying goodbye to me. But before it said goodbye, there was one more serious piece of work to do. Session seventy put me through the worst strip down I had ever been through in all my sessions. It just stripped me down, broke me down over and over. I've lost my mind many times in these sessions. I've thought, "I'm not coming back from this one." This session was one of those. It crunched me completely, and when I came through it, it took me deeper into Deep Time than it had ever taken me before.

I was in a radically expanded frame of time, I don't know how much, maybe a million years. In that context, it gave me an experience of the Future Human that is emerging in history. The Future Human represents a fundamental change in the collective psyche. It's not a change in the surface of our being, it's a change in the very core of our collective being. When the collective psyche shifts like this, all the individual beings that incarnate afterward adopt this species form that we now are. It was *so* beautiful, *so* magnificent, *so* compassionate, *so* healed, *so* intelligent. Everything we're going through now, we will see that it was worth it to give birth to this being. This is a magnificent being. Human beings are so courageous, we are giving our life and soul and blood in history, and it's going to get bad, but through it we're giving birth to this future being.

And the last chapter, which I'm writing now, is "Coming off the Mountain," what happened when I stopped my sessions. It was hard coming off the psychedelic mountain, because when you go this deep over this long a period of time, stepping away can be an ordeal in its own right. I've never tried to summarize it so briefly, and I'm finding it hard to write.

Now, let me bring this to a close and draw some conclusions on entity encounters.

LSD and DMT—as Luis Luna said earlier—initiation into these realities is through becoming these realities. You don't take your self into that reality and have a transpersonal experience there. The ego does not have a transpersonal experience. To become a citizen of that reality, you must let yourself die to what you previously were. You dissolve into the wavelength or the frequency or the modality or the intelligence of that reality. Then, after a while, once you've stabilized at that reality, if you die again, you leave behind what you had previously died into, and you die into yet another level of reality. So my experience in this work was that I was

being successively destroyed and allowed to enter more and more intimate experiences of communion with the living intelligence of our universe, at different levels of reality.

Beings only exist as discreet beings within a certain cosmological context. I associate the sense of a separate being primarily with the psychic and low subtle levels of reality. When you're going into high subtle levels of reality, you're dealing with beings that encompass much larger swaths of existence, until eventually, in causal reality, you're not dealing with separate beings at all, even archetypal beings, but with One Being, one universe with all differentiation, both material and spiritual, taking place within it.

So how do we describe or how do we conceptualize this difference between the DMT encounters with so many beings, and my LSD experience with so few beings, but so much Being? We could talk about levels of reality, which I think is part of the conversation. We can also talk about morphic fields because I think substances have morphic fields associated with them, and LSD, being a relatively young psychedelic, has a lighter morphic field associated with it, with less collective programming than psilocybin or ayahuasca does. But what I'd like to focus on here is what I would call the participatory nature of psychedelic experience. That is, I'd like us to step away from the idea that psychedelics transport us into a reality, and then we experience that reality. I don't think that's what happens. I think there's a much more subtle interplay taking place between the mind that knows and the Mind that is being known. And also I'd like to focus on the role of death and dying in shaping the LSD interface, and the possible significance of the long window of the LSD window compared to shorter-acting psychedelics.

LSD is a pain to work with because it keeps on going when you're pretty much done and ready to return. You've seen enough for today but it keeps going. The short-acting psychedelics such as DMT or 5-MeO-DMT are very handy in this respect. They give you quicker access and a quicker exit. But there is an advantage to the larger time window of LSD because it allows a much more extended interplay between the consciousness doing the exploring and the consciousness you're exploring.

Here I'd like to draw upon the work of my friend Jorge Ferrer and his wonderful work *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory,* where he is articulating

a postperennialist vision and a participatory cosmology. His basic contention is that in spiritual experiences we don't simply discover the world that's simply out there. Rather, our being elicits a set of experiences out of an infinite reality; it's a participatory cosmology. I think something like that has been true in my psychedelic experience.

My experience is that consciousness is an infinite ocean, with infinite possibilities, and many, many levels. When we take a psychedelic, or meditate, or go into trance, or enter creative states, the mind that we drop into this infinite ocean acts as a seed crystal that catalyzes out of the infinite potential a certain set of experiences. Those experiences change us. We drop our silliness, we drop our pain, we are purged of the things that keep us small. We become purer, hopefully kinder, cleaner. And when the seed crystal of our mind is changed, when it is dropped into that infinite consciousness again later, it catalyzes an even deeper form of communion with the universe and an even deeper set of experiences emerges. So, we literally evoke the level of reality and the citizens that live in that level of reality, depending upon the quality of the consciousness that we bring to it. Cutting to the bottom line, I think it's maybe something like this: the less one is a being at the moment of contact with this infinite potential, the fewer beings one will encounter in one's sessions.

It's almost like you have to *be* a being in order to encounter beings. If you are a big being, you'll encounter big beings. If you're a small being, you may encounter small beings. The more you are a being at the moment of contact, that is, the fewer deaths you've undergone, the more beings you are likely to encounter. I wonder sometimes whether this might be something that's going on with the DMT interface, in that, because it's so fast-acting, because it drops you out of your timespace identity so quickly, are there remnants of ego left that precipitate the experience of encounters with other beings. Clearly ayahuasca shatters our ego, but I was interested to see in one of the earlier presentations the affirmation that your ego comes with you in these sessions. According to this hypothesis, if your ego comes with you, then that's going to give a certain structure to the kinds of ways you're likely to experience reality at that next level. *The multiplicity of beings may be a fractal echo of the being quality that we're bringing to the infinite potential of consciousness.* See what I mean?

Which ultimately then brings us back, I think, to the question of levels. Again, I don't have any interest in the categories and don't have any interest in the number of levels, but the basic idea is that the world we enter when we're working with psychedelics is a multilayered world with multiple levels of intelligence. Beings exist relative to levels, and when one moves into deeper and deeper states, there's a sense in which *beings* fall away and Being Itself emerges.

When I moved into the Diamond Luminosity, there were no beings, there was just light. *I* was just light. The amazing thing is that, somehow, my mind was there, but it was an *infinite* mind, it was just infinite pure clarity. Between that infinite light and where you and I are right now, how many layers of existence are there, and how many types of beings populate these levels? I have no idea. But they are surely vast in number.

DISCUSSION OF

LSD and DMT Entity Relation

VIMAL DARPAN: I wonder if you could just speak a little bit about the actual specifics of the protocol that you observed during those seventy immersions, perhaps about strengths, time of day or night?

CHRIS BACHE: My rhythm was to get up early morning, fasting, of course, do some yoga, and meditate. I was always in a totally private space either at home or later, when we had children, at my former wife's office. Lying down on a mattress with headphones, very carefully selected music to pace the stages of a session. Always taken care of, no control required. Someone taking care of me when I'm barfing. People say you don't barf on LSD, but I barf a lot on LSD. When you're channeling enormous accelerations of energy, one of the ways my body handles that acceleration is by throwing up. Also coming back down, I sometimes barf getting back in sync with spacetime.

So total isolation, total protection, total permission to let go, and a willingness to confront whatever comes at you. I mean it's very nice if you open into bliss and that's great. It's when the darkness comes at you full

force, that's when the real work is done, because if you want to be a tourist, that's one thing, but if you want to be a resident, you've got to take out the garbage. You don't know where the garbage is coming from, so you have to be willing to let it take you, and that's the hardest part, that you don't know why this is happening.

JEFFREY KRIPAL: I'm trying to articulate a question here that I think is at the root of a lot of our conversations these days. In your presentation I detected two models of the imagination. One is what I would call the realist model, in which you're experiencing a reality as it really is, and if you were an astronomer you would be able to recognize things that you couldn't recognize as a nonastronomer, which implies that you're actually experiencing the physical universe out there somehow, that we all live in as well. Then there's this participatory model, which is a very different model, that suggests that the subject having the experience is constructing the experience even though the experience itself is also something real, but it's a kind of both/and. Those are the two models I hear.

The question simply is, can the scientists make us better mystics? By that I mean, can there be a collaboration between the sciences and mystical experiences that they sort of feed off one another? Mystical experiences give the scientists insights, and the sciences give the mystics better models, and they kind of go back and forth and hone in on reality. *Or,* this is the tougher question, Are the sciences just another set of metaphors that we experience today just as an ancient mystic would experience, say, a geocentric model of the universe? In other words, when the ancients had mystical experiences, they didn't see galaxies, or did they? The way they framed it was these spheres that they were moving up and down because that was their cosmology. Do you get the question? Is there an objective cosmology here or is this just our projections again?

BACHE: My experience is that it is an objective cosmology. I call it the universe, but I should technically be calling it the cosmos, if by cosmos we mean not just the physical universe but everything that lies outside and makes possible the physical universe. The cosmos *is* spiritual reality as well as physical reality. I would say there is an objective cosmos. Now, what we experience of that objective cosmos, what comes into focus, what we can understand and engage, I think that is where the *participatory* aspect comes

in, the enactment quality. But I don't think it's simply a construct. I don't think it's something we're imagining, in that negative sense, into existence, and so I very much think that, absolutely, bring the scientist into the condition, bring them in contact with these states of consciousness, and there will be a mutual refinement.

As I told Bernard Carr, I have often wished that I had degrees in physics and astronomy because the universe could have shown me so much more. There's much that I haven't even talked about yet. As a philosopher, it taught me what happens when reincarnation goes forward one hundred thousand years; it taught me where reincarnation is taking us; it taught me how humanity is going to change as fast as it needs to change in order to address the historical crisis we're coming into. It taught me lots of things that I could understand given my background, but if I had Bernard's mind it could have taught me so much more. It felt often like it's pouring knowledge into your cup and you hold as much as you can, but the rest is just overflowing, but it's real.

KRIPAL: So, do you think that mystics and visionaries, pre-Darwin, were experiencing something like the evolutionary impulse but simply didn't have a language to express that? Or did it take Darwin to give us that imagination that we could then go out into the cosmos and experience the evolutionary impulse?

BACHE: Well, remember that the Hindus were working in a different cosmology. They were seeing the universe in huge lengths of time; they had cycles and cycles of *kalpas,* right? So, I think that we get pieces. And then we always have John of the Cross who says, "I saw many more things that I'm not going to talk about," and his rule of thumb was if the church doesn't affirm it, I'm not going to talk about it. So we don't know what he saw and what he experienced that was unorthodox, and he just refused to talk about. And, of course, the church had a nasty tendency to execute its mystics. So, I think they *were* seeing more than they told us, and they were probably seeing more than they could understand, just like I have seen more than I could understand.

Now, I'd like you to imagine taking yourself forward five hundred thousand years. We're so proud of our mind, but we'll seem like chimpanzees in five hundred thousand years from now. When those future

beings are going into these states, they will be able to see and understand so much more than even the best of us can see and understand now. We're so glad that we're beginning to experience the universe and beginning to have perhaps the beginnings of a more adequate understanding of the magnitude of the intentionality and intelligence of it, but we're just babies on the evolutionary ladder, we're just children. Imagine what we'll be able to understand when we are true adults or when we are elders in the evolutionary story.

Ralph Metzner: Did you have a sense that you were being guided by a specific recurring being that you had a relationship with, like a guru?

Bache: Not a being who ever showed him or herself, but a relationship with what I call the creative intelligence, a relationship with the intelligence of the universe, a relationship with consciousness. Everybody has to have a word for describing this reality, and some call it the Absolute, some call it God, some call it the Divine. I call it Beloved. It's my Beloved.

Metzner: A personal thing?

Bache: Well, I think the personal comes from me, because there's such heartfelt emotion. When you're drawn deeply into the being of existence, and then you fall out of it, you come back into a smaller state, there is such a longing, and so I call it my Beloved because my entire life serves that. It *is* a loving of extraordinary proportions, an intelligence of extraordinary proportions, *but* it never took a specific form. I've encountered what I call the council of elders, I was given teachings from different beings at different levels, and there have been very active dialogues where I would ask a question and it would give me answers; but in general, it never came out from behind the curtain. And when I asked it, "Who are you?" I ended up dying into a deeper level until I learned that there wasn't another being in that level at all, only Being Itself.

Metzner: Yeah, but you did ask, you said, "Who are you?" So, there was a you, it was an I-thou.

Bache: Yes, it was an I-thou, because it was taking me somewhere, it was showing me things, it was taking me, and here's an interesting thing: When

I was asking it, "Who are you, what are you?" at the end of that session, what I learned, the thing that moved me the deepest, wasn't actually what it showed me. It was what showing me meant to *It*. It was so pleased to finally have not just me, but humanity beginning to become conscious enough that it's coming back to the creative intelligence and recognize what the creative intelligence has been doing for fourteen billion years. It is so pleased to show its work to somebody. That touched me; that just wiped me out. I mean, I wept on that.

Rory Spowers: Thank you very much, it's really fascinating. I'm really intrigued by your notion of the future human, and I think, like everyone in this room, I've spent much of my life wanting this consciousness shift that is necessary for us to move out of the crisis of separation that's in a way been going on ever since the so-called great transformation at the beginning of self-reflective consciousness, the absolute apotheosis of this atomized individualistic thing. And in a way the big cultural event of our age is going to be the consensus reality shifting from this notion of consciousness being some epiphenomenon of the brain going on inside our skulls, to actually recognizing it and experiencing it as the ground of all being made manifest through this, us all. So, what I was really asking is, Within your visions of the birth of the future human, how congruent is that with your notion of the future human, and how do you see that manifesting? Could you comment on that in any way in terms of your experience?

Bache: I think your description is good, it's right. I think what's being shattered is this ontological privacy, this sense of privacy so I can hurt you and I'm OK, I can cause hunger in the world and I'm OK, because we have a sense of privacy, that I'm me and you're you. I think that is in the process of being shattered. So, you might think of it as a radical expansion of our heart. When our heart holds the whole world, then the world will be safe from our mind. We will not hurt with our mind. I think what is happening in some ways could be seen as a vast expansion of heart.

Now here's another part, in my thirty-eighth session, during the Benediction of Blessings, just as earlier I had experienced the whole of my life as a completed whole, in this session I experienced all of my incarnational lives coming to a fruition as one being. I think human experience is an incredibly precious phenomenon. Lifetime by lifetime,

living experience is like a thread of light. We're wrapping our lives around a core and we keep coming back and coming back. Sooner or later, there comes a point where all of the lives of the soul ignite and fuse, and I experienced this as an explosion of light. When this happened, a diamond light exploded from my chest. It was the first time I really understood why it's called the Diamond Light. It's a totally different order of consciousness, it's not like Chris Bache +1, it's a different order of being.

Now, I think history is giving birth to the soul on Earth, which I'm calling the Diamond Soul, and I think there's a relationship between the geopolitical crises that we're coming into and this inner birth that has been gestating within us since the beginning of the species. Here's the wonderful thing. When we actually come to the birth of the future human, we're going to discover that 99 percent of the work has already been done. Labor follows gestation, we have been gestating for thousands and thousands of years. We're about to go into labor, but all the foundational work has been done.

SPOWERS: We are remembering what we actually are?

BACHE: We are remembering and actualizing. We actualize into a new level so that when the soul is born fully conscious on Earth, it's not only consciously aware of its core, it's in more intimate rapport with the intelligence of the totality, and with each other. I actually think that as we get smarter as a species, we'll be able to solve all the technical problems that are now holding us back. That's the curious thing, as long as we stay fragmented and the collective psyche is fragmented, we stay, to a certain extent, stupid. But when we become whole, when we become integrated, then we literally become more intelligent, the brain becomes enhanced, if you will, and we can do things that we couldn't do before that solves everything we needed to solve. That I think is where we're going.

JUDITH WAY: Would you relate that to generating *bodhicitta,* for the necessity of the journey that was then unfolding for you?

BACHE: Yes. I would. Before I entered the ocean of suffering, a session gave me a painful experience that caused what the Buddhists would call an awakening of bodhicitta in me. It awakened in me the will to save all sentient beings. I didn't know it at the time, but the ocean of suffering was a

commitment that I had taken on before I was born. My life was incarnated to do this work, just as all of us are incarnated to do the work that we recognize when we find it.

WAY: How important do you think it is to have spiritual practice accompanying journeys using psychedelics, and voyaging into truth?

BACHE: To me, it's vital. It's critical because we're finding that it's pretty easy to crack the shell and go out into non-ordinary states, but to extract maximum value from these experiences requires creating a container, holding our sessions in a particular way. Remembering them, holding them, and enacting them. To me, daily practice is absolutely critical if you're going to enter into temporary, short-term, intense states of consciousness. In fact, I would suggest that the deeper into temporary states you want to go, the stronger should be your daily practice. There's a discussion in the "Diamond Luminosity" chapter where I describe the last five years of my work. When I was getting into the Diamond Luminosity material, I began to incorporate Vajrayana Buddhist practice into my daily life.

These states of consciousness sweep through us and bring huge tidal waves of energy and knowledge that just *wash* through you. Then at the end of the day, you shrink down again, but you're always connected. Once you open to certain levels of reality, it's like there's a filament that always connects them to your being. There's a form of energy that comes to you from that level of reality, and the more levels of realty that you have connected with, the more your body is having to deal with this inflow of energy. I found that this excess energy became really problematic. My subtle energy system was overheating. I found that doing Vajrayana practices gave this energy a place to run, it helped it run. Plus, I know Buddhism better than other systems. It's user-friendly for me because of its agnosticism, and it's been a very helpful system to help me understand and frame some of my experiences, but that's just me. The deep spiritual masters of other religious systems have great capacity to understand, to illuminate these experiences too.

WAY: From the perspective of where you stand now, do you see birth and death as it's manifested in this realm here as a fiction? Do we have a fictitious narrative about birth and death?

BACHE: We certainly have a fictitious narrative about birth and death. We think our life begins at birth. Our life didn't begin at birth! Just look into your consciousness, do hypnotic regression, you'll find capacities that are older than your physical body. We think we are going to die when our body dies; that's a fiction, that's not true. I can put it to you simply—I am so looking forward to the end of my life. I'm not afraid of dying, I am looking forward to it. I won't push it. As long as I'm needed, my commitment is here, but the minute I'm done, I'm gone. Because I've died so many times in my sessions, if I can get back to where I was in my deepest sessions, I will consider it a fair trade. And I think I will be able to find my way there, because Robert Munroe says that you can go anywhere when you die if you know the address. I know the address of these dimensions; they are in my being,

ANGELA VOSS: Thank you so much Chris. Very, very inspirational. I immediately thought, well this is exactly what the theosophists were about when they talk about assimilating their consciousness to God. This is the process that they're trying to relate, so you really brought it alive, so I'm so grateful to you for that. It also reminded me of the alchemical process, what the alchemists were doing with the solution and the nigredo. Everything we study conceptually you really showed how it's a deep, painful, transformatory process that these adepts have always gone through . . .

BACHE: And in that context, integration is as demanding as going out. Coming back in, surviving it, holding it, integrating it, learning to love and breathe it. That's really hard work, and in that respect the alchemical position really speaks to that process.

VOSS: When you were talking about Beloved, it reminded me of Dante as well, who was inspired by the beloved. I suppose my question is, about the language, about the fact that the way you speak of it reminds me of the great mystics of the past, reminds me of that ability to capture experience and concept and deep intellectual understanding in one language, and it seems to me that's what we need for this new human being to emerge, is to enable the world to speak in this language.

BACHE: I think as our experience deepens, we'll find new ways to say things to reflect that deeper experience. So, as we become more, as new

skills come online, we'll find new ways to language those skills. As new relationships emerge, we'll find new ways to language that. I think language is growing, language is becoming richer. Remember what I said about ineffability? If we make ineffability a primary quality of the mystical experience, it's almost as if we're saying that God doesn't want to be known. My experience is that God *wants* to be known and will work very hard to help us know her. When we hit the limits of our experience, language fails; but if we keep pressing, we learn a new language, it teaches us the language. We stretch it in ways and learn how to speak in new ways. When you were describing the people you were describing in your talk today, the way they're bending language and how the great seers are bending language, and the great poets, that speaks to me. I wish I were a painter. I wish I had Alex Grey's ability to paint my visions, but I'm a writer, and I work very hard to try to boil them down to forms that people can share the way we share Alex Grey's paintings.

CARINA COOPER: When you were talking about your experience and God being there to celebrate what you did, it really reminds me of a quote that I love that goes, "We're all aspects of existence, or of God, experiencing itself," and I love that and your talk very much reflected that to me.

BACHE: Yes, we come from the divine, we are within the divine right at this moment, we return to the divine. I'm not a Vedantist, I don't hold the Vedantic worldview that we are a drop returning to the ocean and we lose ourselves, our identity as a drop. That's not the way I think of this. I think once we go through this gestational process that time-space puts us through with all this development, I think it's leading to the formation of a being that is able to maintain individual awareness even under the intensity of returning to the divine. If we come back into the divine expanse, or however you want to describe it, too soon, we simply are shattered, we can't maintain coherence. But if we do the work, we become diamonds capable of sustaining the encounter. The diamond is a beautiful image because a diamond can withstand enormous pressures and yet maintain its integrity. I think that's what we're doing.

COOPER: Thank you. And one last thing, when you were talking about humanity shifting, is that what I hear about a lot, or read about a lot, called ascension, that we are here for this moment?

BACHE: That's another way of languaging it. I think we feel it, don't we? Don't we feel that we're coming to a dead end? We feel that there's this rising coming up from beneath us; we feel that there's no other option except to make this step. People language it in different ways, but what's common is that we feel it, and it feels like an irresistible impulse and a life-calling we cannot resist. It's just part of us.

Thank you.

CHAPTER 10

Biological Gods

Science (Fiction) and Some Emergent Mythologies[*2]

Jeffrey J. Kripal

I am about to give a fairly formal lecture, and I'll explain why in a minute, but before I do that, I want to give you some autobiographical and professional context to set the table for the perspective from which I'm coming, which is somewhat different from a number of the presentations, but not all. It's quite close to Angela's, for example. I'm really coming from the perspective of the humanities, certainly not the sciences or social sciences. I think of the sciences as those forms of knowing that focus on objects that can be measured, quantified, replicated, and tested, and I think of the humanities as those disciplines or ways of knowing that focus on the nature of subjectivity, or better, the nature of consciousness. One focuses on the object; one focuses on the subject. Of course, we need them both, but I'm really going be coming from the perspective of the humanities.

In the humanities we're not after explanation, what the Germans call *Erklärung;* we're after what the Germans call *Verstehen*. Humanists are after understanding. They are after some kind of imaginative entering into these worlds, so that they can reconstruct these worldviews as one might understand a novel or participate in a film one is watching. The languages

and the metaphors are different. Humanist scholars tend to shy away from metaphors of mechanisms and machines. They tend not to be as interested in causality. They're much more interested in meaning and mind, and in particular, narrative or story. This is really the bread and butter of the humanities. What is the narrative here? What is the story? And *whose* story is this? That is, whose good does it serve? In the study of religion, this is partly what we mean by "myth," myth not in the sense of untruth but in the sense of this deep underlying narrative within which a particular culture lives and understands itself and that serves particular interests and groups of people.

I work in a discipline called the history of religions. Mircea Eliade has been mentioned a number of times, such as in Michael's talk. Eliade founded my discipline at the University of Chicago in 1961. I never met the man. I got there in 1985, and he died that winter. I was trained and examined by his successors, an American Buddhologist named Frank Reynolds, an American Sanskritist become historian of religions named Wendy Doniger, and a Romanian historian of religions named Ioan Culianu. The history of religions is historical. Such historians are interested in tracing religious ideas through time, through large spans of time, for sure. But they are also interested in comparative patterns that are not located in any particular culture or time period. Eliade's *Shamanism* book is a perfect example of how a historian of religion thinks. It is no accident that Eliade was also a major Romanian literary figure. Historians of religions are also very interested in the literary or poetic quality of scholarship. They are not just interested in describing a religious worldview. They are interested in conjuring it, or reinvoking it in the work that they do. This, by the way, is why I'm going to read my lecture to you, and why I hope that it has a kind of literary quality for you, despite its obvious informal or causal style on the page.

Anton, you asked a couple of days ago, "What does it all mean?" I have an answer. I think what this all means is that the big story, really the big stories, in which human cultures are living and breathing today, are not working anymore. They have become dysfunctional. They cause people to suffer. They cause geopolitical conflict. They're dangerous. And by stories, I mean religions. Religions are essentially big stories (otherwise called mythologies). I think that what's happening through a lot of these entheogenic encounters and this turn to ecology and the natural world is

that a new story is emerging, and that this is profoundly dependent on the sciences and what we are learning about the natural world. But the sciences are not sufficient. To produce that story, you need something else. So that's where I'm coming from.

I want to just run through what I've done and how I've got to this place because, again, I think it will help. I apologize if it sounds like a resume, I don't mean it to, I just really want you to know where I'm coming from. I was trained to study Hinduism. Actually, I spent ten to twelve years of my early life studying Indian languages, Sanskrit, and especially Bengali. And I worked on a form of Hinduism called Tantra, particularly in nineteenth-century Bengal. *Kali's Child* was my first book. It was my dissertation. I also worked on psychoanalysis and Hinduism and how Hinduism entered the West in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After that initial work, I wrote two books on the study of mysticism. The first, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom,* is all about the mystical experiences of scholars of mysticism. I think this is where the work might tap into this audience the deepest. I am a psychedelic virgin, but I'm not a mystical virgin. I've had mystical experiences, and one of my first major interests was other academics who have had these mind-blowing mystical experiences and how they then camouflaged those in their scholarship. Inevitably, they did not talk about them openly. It was taboo. So they turned them into theory, turned them into ideas. The second book was *The Serpent's Gift*: *Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion.* I've argued for almost two decades now that the comparative study of religion is functioning essentially as a kind of academic gnosticism, a kind of public mystical tradition that goes on undercover, as it were.

About ten to twelve years ago, in 2007 to be precise, I published a history of Esalen, the institute in Big Sur that pioneered what we call "the human potential movement." This meeting reminds me very, very much of the kinds of meetings we organize at Esalen every year. There's a kind of think-tank dimension to Esalen that I help run now.

I was writing this book as someone trained as an Indologist, as someone who studies text, who reads other languages, who interprets dead people. But while I was writing the book, which became *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion,* I interacted with many living people, of course, and they started to tell me crazy stories that I knew couldn't have happened

but that I knew happened. I became really interested in those stories, and how little I had in my academic toolbox to deal with those—really almost nothing. I had been studying mystical literature for twenty years and I just had no way of even beginning to understand these living people who were telling me these wild stories.

So I turned to the paranormal as a philosophical and a historical topic, and I wrote a further two books. *Authors of the Impossible* is an intellectual history of the paranormal. Contrary to what people think, the paranormal (or the psychical, for that matter) did not originate in the tabloids. The concept or category did not originate with horror movies or romantic novels. The psychical actually originated right here in England with the Society of Psychical Research, in London, and the paranormal originated with a number of French scientists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, after which they hopped the ocean to Harvard with Williams James, and to Duke University with J. B. Rhine. So, these concepts have some very elite academic pedigrees, but these will be forgotten over the course of the twentieth century as the concepts enter pop culture and the entertainment industry, first through the pulp fiction of the first half of the century, then through film, television, and the entertainment industry in the second half. The latter is what the second book, *Mutants and Mystics,* is about.

I'm also very concerned about how people compare religions, often unconsciously. I wrote a textbook, *Comparing Religion,* for a big survey course at Rice that I teach every fall to about two hundred students. The book is designed to help them to understand why it's so important to be aware of what one's comparative assumptions are. Are all religions the same? Are they all different? Are they similar *and* different? Is one exclusively true and the rest false? These are some of the options people take up, and this writing and teaching is very much about that process. I think this is relevant to this conversation because the history of comparison deals a good deal with the history of monotheism and the kind of monotheistic logics of exclusivism that drive a lot of our comparative practices to this day. My latest book, *The Super Natural,* has been mentioned by a number of people in this meeting and is what I would call a collaborative approach to these questions. Whitley [Strieber] and I met actually through another mutual friend when I was writing the *Mutants* book, and we decided to try to shift the public conversation around "things

strange" in a way that didn't fall into this epistemology of belief or the epistemology of reason—that is, it's all literally true, or it's all nonsense. We were trying to explore a middle realm that accepts that these things clearly happen but does not sign its name to this or that interpretation, be it a belief or an explanation.

And finally, my next book *Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of Religion,* is not out yet, but this is really a memoir and a manifesto that ties all the other books together between two covers. The erotic and esoteric refers to the two halves of my career. I was obsessed with sex in religion for the first half. Now I'm obsessed with the paranormal. I'm fifty-four, I'm not thirty-four, so you know, go figure.

[audience laughter]

OK, alright, so let's go. I want to get into the lecture here. The lecture is called "Biological Gods." I'll explain why as we move on.

ORIGINS IN THE SKY

Every story has a beginning, which is seldom really a beginning. Here is one such beginning that is not a beginning: On June 24, 1947, American businessman and pilot Ken Arnold spotted nine silver "somethings" whizzing over the mountains near Yakima, Washington, in perfect formation and at incredible speeds. As a good patriot, Mr. Arnold immediately reported what he saw. It was 1947, after all, and it was widely believed that the Soviets might try to invade or fire nuclear missiles from the northwest. It was Arnold's description of these things as moving across the sky as if they were skipping over water like a pie plate or a saucer, he said, that gave us the expression "flying saucer," through a journalist on the scene later that same day named Bill Bequette. We came *that* close to a culture of flying pie plates. The story was then supercharged two weeks later when the Air Force announced that it had recovered a flying disc near Roswell, New Mexico, where some of the American nuclear bombers were stationed. A retraction the next day did nothing but fuel the fires further, now with the gasoline of a cover-up.

It was the same U.S. Air Force that coined the expression "UFO" a few years later, in 1953 to be exact, largely for defense reasons. In short, the acronym, and its origins, is a Cold War expression and has always carried a certain hint of danger or fear. After all, it named something that a nation-state needs to defend itself against.

Ever since its entrance into the public imagination in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the saucer or UFO phenomenon has been central to American popular culture, morphing, fascinating, and baffling anew as each decade ticks by. We are still defending ourselves against it, including in the academy. Part of this history of defense has involved what amounts to a popular demonology focused on the feared figure of the "gray," a short, large-headed humanoid with immense almond eyes often described as "oriental." Some trace the figure back to the pulp fiction magazines of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s. Such pulp fiction and cinematic influences shape the later abduction events, but they did not produce the basic imagery, not even close. Strange, short humanoids have been featured in folklore and mythology for millennia. We could spend the rest of the day going through these.

The 1947 Arnold sighting was followed by the earliest public abduction cases. The first is usually identified as that of the Brazilian farmer and eventual lawyer Antonio Villas Boas in 1957. Villas Boas, who never retracted his story, reported a military-style abduction and a subsequent graphically sexualized encounter with a not-quite-human, naked, growling woman who basically raped him, after which she motioned to the stars and to her own belly in order to signal the conception of a hybrid starchild. The second and much more publicized case was that of the American mixed-race couple Barney and Betty Hill in 1961, whose reports of lost time, large eyes, and sexual experimentation entered the public culture through a series of psychiatric hypnosis sessions and John G. Fuller's subsequent *The Interrupted Journey,* which came out in 1966. This is the definitive beginning of the abduction narrative, at least in American culture. This key event, which fuses civil rights, racial anxieties, and sexual hybridity themes with classic sci-fi tropes, is now iconic among the UFO community and, believe it or not, the state of New Hampshire, which has an official sign on the highway in New Hampshire marking the abduction location.

The late 1960s and ’70s witnessed an interpretive move away from the early nuts and bolts approaches in which the UFO was assumed to be a spaceship or craft of some sort and the “just nuts” readings in which the witnesses were assumed to be hallucinating or pathological liars. The occult folklore readings of journalist John Keel and astronomer and computer scientist Jacques Vallée now emerge, right around 1968 and 1969. Both are especially noteworthy and deserve some comment before we move on, as my own readings are very close to their own.

John Keel’s definitive statement is in *UFOs: Operation Trojan Horse,* which came out in 1970. This is a book that lays out a particular demonology in which the aliens are akin to traditional demons and abduction fairies, and the UFO phenomenon is fundamentally deceptive and tricksterlike. As Keel put it, “The UFOnauts are the liars, not the contactees.” In other words, he believed his sources. He didn’t believe the entities that were appearing in these events. The contactees, hundreds of whom he had interviewed, were simply trying to explain their traumas and confusions. What they were describing often made no sense, and *that* was their sense? The most absurd and irrational cases thus became for Keel the most important, since they spoke to this trickster quality. If the much later motto of *The X-Files* in the 1990s was “I want to believe,” the motto of John Keel was “Don’t.”

He was very suspicious of belief and thought it was a real mistake. In Keel’s view, UFOs are not hard, stable objects, much less high-tech spaceships. They are soft, paraphysical manifestations, what he called “transmogrification of energy.” The real meaning of these events, moreover, was not in the light shows in the sky but in the contactees themselves, and ultimately in the deeper structures of consciousness and its relationship to the cosmos. In a similar cosmic humanist spirit, he noted what he called “the reflective quality” of the contact experiences, that is, the tendency of the events to reflect back to the witnesses whatever frames of reference they brought to the experience. This is what Chris [Bache] was calling the participatory nature of these events. The demons and angels of medieval Catholicism and the elves, fauns, and fairies of early modern European folklore thus became the sci-fi aliens, beneficent Venutians, and most famous of all, the Mothman of Cold War America.

Despite such impulses, Keel also insisted that there was a *there* there, that the contact experience was witness to an invisible, probably hyperdimensional presence that was fundamentally unknowable, but whose contours could be approximated in the ghostly revelations of Spiritualism and the golden tablets of Mormonism. He thus encouraged his readers to stop listening to the engineers and the scientists and go straight to mystical literature and scholars of religion, who, for him at least, are the people who can really help here. (This, of course, is why I like John Keel.) The religions themselves, though, like the UFOnauts, were not to be trusted. He called the religions "devil theories" whose organized belief systems conceal far more than they reveal. So Keel had a grand conspiracy theory about religion itself that was quite dark.

Jacques Vallée's *Passport to Magonia* appeared in 1969, just a few months before Keel's book. The conclusions of *Passport to Magonia* are remarkably similar to those of Keel, although I think it's fair to say that a certain cosmic optimism peeks through at times. He's not as dark as John Keel. Vallée grew up in Paris, was trained as an astronomer, and then moved to the United States in the early 1960s and helped NASA map Mars at the University of Texas, Austin, before he earned a Ph.D. in computer science at Northwestern University. Like Keel, Vallée began with a physicalist understanding of the phenomenon. He thought that UFOs were spaceships, but then he abandoned this toosimplistic theory as the data piled up.

In Vallée's readings, the UFO phenomenon is best contextualized in the history of religions, demonology, and folklore as an esoteric manifestation of some other, quite real, hyperdimensional intelligence, perhaps even some future form of human consciousness reaching back into the past, that is, into our present. Vallée does not claim to know what is going on here, but he suspects some kind of recalibration from the future aimed at our mythology and largely unconscious belief systems. He doesn't think you'll ever get a landing on the White House lawn or before the Parliament building. He thinks that the phenomenon is manipulating our imagination, our cultural imagination. Vallée's work was celebrated in Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* in 1978, on whose film set Vallée served as consultant and whose French scientist character Dr. Claude Lacombe, played by Francois Truffaut, is based on Vallée himself. Significantly, the

central narrative of the film revolves around an overwhelming precognition of the main protagonist, Roy Neary, played by Richard Dreyfuss.

This parapsychological dimension is very faithful to the actual phenomenology of UFO encounters, which commonly appear to actualize such capacities. Vallée in fact had made this parapsychological theme central to his interpretation in his follow-up book, *The Invisible College*.

I should say that, if you have not watched *Close Encounters,* you really should. I consider the film to be the high point of the whole film treatment of UFOs, until recently that is, with the appearance of *Arrival*. Until you get to the last landing scene of *Close Encounters,* it is extremely close or faithful to the reports and descriptions of actual encounters. Once you get to the landing scene, however, you've abandoned the historical encounter and entered the realm of Hollywood. But until then, Spielberg is clearly talking to Jacques, and Jacques is telling him what to do and what not to do.

Culturally speaking, Spielberg's nuanced approach would lose out to the childish, shoot-em-up Space-Western genre of George Lucas's *Star Wars,* which appeared just a year before *Close Encounters*. Richard Dreyfuss recently wondered in an interview what would have happened if Spielberg's film appeared first. Significantly, the first add-line of *Close Encounters* was this: "You have nothing to fear by looking up." Compare that to the very title of *Star Wars*. Wars . . . "You have everything to fear."

Dreyfuss explained how the famous NASA *Earthrise* photo affected the mood of the set and the film, and how it was Spielberg's intention not only to affirm that we are all one species, but that we all share a common cosmos with the aliens. "We are all one thing," as Dreyfuss put it. But that cosmic sensibility lost out. *Star Wars* won, and now kids are fighting and hitting each other with toy lightsabers.

The hard technological interpretation of the UFO phenomenon of Spielberg's film is much more problematic. It is worth observing that Vallée pushed Spielberg to not represent the UFOs of his film in simple technological ways, but the director refused on the grounds that this is what the public wanted. And he, of course, was right.

My own approach is quite close to the paranormal readings of Keel and Vallée, both of which bear strong resonances with the earlier parapsychological approach to the flying saucer phenomenon of C. G. Jung

in the late 1950s, and further back still to the paranormal comparisons of the American humorist and collector Charles Fort in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Jung's book, one of his last, came out in 1958, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*. The little book is actually quite prescient of what would follow, particularly in the later UFOlogical work of Vallée and Keel.

The reading briefly performed here reverses the naive comparativisms of popular culture as expressed in authors such as Erich von Däniken and popular television shows like *Ancient Aliens*. This latter comparative practice reads ancient religious iconography and myths about gods and magical events as mistaken perceptions of historical encounters with the advanced technology of extraterrestrials. It is a radically reductive and materialistic reading after Arthur C. Clarke's famous quip, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

In these popular comparative practices, the gods were in fact ancient astronauts misperceived by scientifically naive ancients. I think the present ancient alien enthusiasts have it exactly backward. I think the contemporary extraterrestrials are in fact gods, misperceived by spiritually naive moderns whose scientism renders them clueless and incapable of handling what is essentially a modern mystical literature. They think that the gods were ancient aliens; I think that the aliens are modern gods.

These modern gods, of course, are likely not what they appear to be either. In the end, I doubt very much we are dealing with ancient astronauts *or* modern gods. Perhaps my present position might be best captured by a humorous quip that Dennis's brother, Terence [McKenna], penned a few years ago, "We are part of a symbiotic relationship with something which disguises itself as an extraterrestrial invasion so as not to alarm us." That's not only very funny. It's also very close to the truth of things.

This notion of a hidden but real symbiotic relationship brings me to my three key texts: Philip K. Dick's *VALIS,* published in 1981; Whitley Strieber's *Communion,* published in 1987; and Barbara Ehrenreich's *Living with a Wild God,* published in 2014. In each case, the author describes a life-changing encounter with what any earlier culture would have recognized as a deity or a demon. Each engages these earlier religious interpretations but finally moves outside of them to posit an actual invisible species, a life-form not dependent on carbon-based chemicals like our own

bodies and brains but some form of intelligent plasma or conscious form of energy. Each author suggests in his or her own way that these energy creatures feed off human emotion and engage human beings in order to tame, domesticate, or evolve us via sexual communion and some kind of interspecies symbiosis or communion.

Now, it should be noted that such shockingly realist speculations are not new. They were explicit in the work of American humorist and collector of anomalies Charles Fort in the second and third decade of the last century. But they were also already central in the seventeenth and eighteenth century speculations on the theology of electricity and figures like Prokop Diviš and Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, the latter of whom suggested that "the nature of the soul is analogous to electrical phenomena." This, of course, was before electricity had been framed in entirely secular and electromagnetic terms. Oetinger was inspired by his study of the Kabbalah or Jewish mysticism, and the mysterious nature of the *chashmal,* an extremely rare Hebrew word alternately translated as "amber or metallic color" that only appears in the book of Ezekiel and is used to describe the whatever-the-hell-it-was that the prophet saw and was taken by. Diviš notes that his chashmal was rendered by the Latin translators of the time as *species electri,* or electrical species. In two more fascinating moments of the same word's history, the Hebrew *chashmal* was rendered as *elektron* when Ezekiel was translated into Greek and is today the modern Hebrew word for electricity. So that all goes back to Ezekiel's vision of the chariot, or whatever it was. OK, let's get to our three cases.

THE COMING OF *VALIS*

How many of you have read Philip K. Dick? Dick is one of the most celebrated American science fiction authors. He was also a great American mystic. On February 20, 1974, the doorbell rang at the California apartment of Philip K. Dick. The author was feeling a bit woozy from some sodium pentothal that he had been given at the dentist's office for an oral surgery earlier that day. A young woman was at the door delivering a packet of painkillers. Dick was struck by her long brown hair and her beauty. He was also attracted to her gold necklace, which featured the fish sign used by the early Christians as a symbol for Christ. It may have been a complicated

attraction. Dick's wife at the time, Tessa Dick, has suggested that he was gazing at the necklace as a stratagem for staring down the young woman's blouse, which sported a plunging neckline. Stratagem or not, this golden symbol that gleamed in the sun triggered something profound and more than libidinous in the author.

The effects were certainly dramatic enough. For the next two months, February and March of 1974, Dick would find himself passing through a remarkable series of events, including the appearance of various memories of past lives that caused him to remember what he called his celestial origins. Dick explains, "This has to do with the DNA, because the memory is located in the DNA." What does such a genetic memory reveal? "You remember your real nature, which is to say your origin from the stars." Such impossible thoughts were fired into Dick's brain by what he calls a "transcendentally rational mind," a vast superconsciousness that he called VALIS. It was his own acronym, for Vast Active Living Intelligence System.

The phrase was, on one level, Dick's own gloss on the ancient Christian doctrine of the Logos, a kind of cosmic intellect or Supermind that underlies everything that is and that reveals itself as God. The Logos, of course, is identified with Christ in the first lines of the Gospel of John. Dick took this further.

For Dick, everything and everyone is made of language, is made of the Logos. Everything. Not surprisingly, then, writing and reading were occult practices for Dick. This is a theme I will come back to often. The paranormal has something to do with language, and so professional writers tend to be attracted to the subject, find it meaningful, find it real. Dick is an extreme case of this. He came to see his own sci-fi novels, especially the last three, *VALIS, The Divine Invasion,* and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer,* as secret gnostic gospels. The real author of these coded texts was not Philip K. Dick. It was the Logos. Indeed, he went so far as to describe a plasmate that he believed was carried by the letters and words of his late novels, an energetic plasmate that erotically bonded with these texts' ready readers in order to produce a kind of divine human symbiote or what he called a "homoplasmate," a human plasmate. A homoplasmate for Dick was a human being who had cross-bonded with the energies of the divine gnosis

encoded in mystical texts, especially, it turns out, his paperback novels. A homoplasmate was a human being deified by a special book, his own.

Dick would go on to write three novels—his last three—about this biolinguistic mysticism and this interspecies cross-bonding before his body died eight years later in 1982. He would also type and scroll some ten thousand pages of private journal entries, known as the *Exegesis,* in a vain attempt to read out their meanings through acts of interpretation (which is what *exegesis* means). Eventually, Dick began to claim that he had been resynthesized or reprogrammed by VALIS. His language bounces back and forth between these biological and digital frameworks, as if the entire cosmos were one gigantic conscious machine or computer brain.

None of this, of course, makes any sense. That is, it is not rational in the simple secular sense of that word. Whatever Dick experienced cannot be slotted into the working of the world as we normally experience it with our five senses, our linear logic, and our normal sense of what is real. And yet it happened. Indeed, VALIS was the most real and most important event of Dick's entire life. Everything else paled in comparison. In the end, Dick settled into what we might recognize as a modern gnosticism, but one with a distinctly biological emphasis and evolutionary goal. As a modern gnostic, Dick wrote that the purpose of evolution is to create an isomorphism between the cosmic ground of being and the divine spark that exists within us as our deepest unconscious nature. He understood his experience of VALIS to be the ultimate goal of evolution itself, which he defines as that future moment in which the separation between human and divine consciousness is finally abolished and God comes to know itself through the temporary terminal of the human brain. Dick, of course, believed that he had been graced with a temporary experience of this future goal in the winter of 1974. VALIS, in short, was a momentary glimmer of humanity's own evolved supernature. It was us from the future reaching back to us in the present.

TRANCE-FORMATIONS

My second case study is sitting right here. Whitley Strieber is a professional writer mostly known for his horror and science fiction works. He is also arguably the twentieth century's most famous abductee due to a single dark

and beautiful book, *Communion*. The events of this text revolve around a single evening, that of December 26, 1985, while the Strieber family was vacationing in their cabin in the Hudson Valley region.

Strieber remembered little of these events when he awoke the next morning, except for the uncanny memory of a barn owl staring at him in the window during the night. But he knew there was no barn owl. He checked the snowy windowsill. He felt extremely anxious, felt pain in the anal region from what would prove to be a serious injury (suffered the night before), and quickly developed an infection on a finger. He sought medical and psychiatric help for his various physical and emotional symptoms. Two hypnosis sessions followed on March 1 and 5, 1986, under the care of Dr. Donald F. Klein, Director of Research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute. Anne Strieber, Whitley's wife, who did not share the full scope of her husband's experiences but, like others, did experience various poltergeistlike anomalies around them, also underwent a series of hypnosis sessions on March 13 and 21 under the care of a second psychiatrist Dr. Robert Nyman.

The transcripts of these four hypnosis sessions of a husband and a wife form the heart of *Communion*. If you read *Communion,* much of what you are reading is the actual hypnosis transcripts. Through these trance texts, a terrifying story emerges. The story involved four different types of beings, including some willowy figures and what he calls a "good army of short, stocky, troll-like blue creatures" who carried Strieber off, paralyzed and screaming, lifted him above the trees, presumably to an awaiting craft, and submitted him to various disturbing medical procedures, including a needle inserted into his brain and an ugly instrument inserted into his anus, he assumed, to collect fecal matter (hence the injury). The latter procedure was also accompanied by an erection and an emotionless ejaculation with the semen collected into a little tube held by the willowy gray figures.

The biological and now graphically sexual accents of Strieber's memories are obvious and central to the narrative. They are simply unavoidable. They were also, I must add, violent. The doctor he saw for his symptoms treated the situation as a potential crime scene, and Whitley himself would later describe the forced anal penetration as a rape. The central commanding figure of the narrative was a thin, almond-eyed magnificent being who Strieber related to as feminine. Her immense black

eyes and humanoid face, painted by Ted Jacobs on the cover, was what cemented the iconic form of the alien in the public imagination in the winter and spring of 1987 when Strieber's book hit the bestseller charts.

Cover icon aside, Strieber avoided or heavily qualified the term *alien* in the original text. There he prefers to call the beings simply "the visitors," as it was not at all clear to him what they were or where they came from. Whitley in fact entertains multiple hypotheses, both in *Communion* and in a series of commentaries or nonfiction books that would quickly follow. This forest of hypotheses, as he calls it, included a striking suggestion that the entire complex of events was an expression of mind, a special power within us that can materialize its content in the physical environment, and that can in turn be witnessed by others. His deepest hunches can, in fact, be had on the very first page of the book, where he introduces the book with this line, "The enigmatic presence of the human mind winks back from the dark."

Other speculations about what happened to him followed. He had an MRI and temporal lobe tests done. He had the ground in the basement tested for radon. Everything came up negative or normal. One is struck by the profound physical nature of Strieber's approach to all this.

He has also bravely speculated on the traumatic roots of his experiences and how some early physical trauma as a boy on his father's military base in San Antonio may have cracked him open for these later sorts of visitations. Whitley spoke to that yesterday, so I'm not going to dwell on it here. In the end, none of these explanatory models really explained what he had known, however. Eventually, he would offer another possibility, namely, that the alien experience is "what the force of evolution looks like when it acts on conscious creatures." In other words, there is something *there,* the force of evolution, but it has taken on an imaginal form that can relate, in some symbolic or indirect fashion, to this hairless monkey that we call a human being.

And evolution, of course, is partly, or largely, about sex or, to be more scientific, reproduction. In the standard models, at least, it takes *a lot* of sex to get human evolution. Strieber does not quite make this connection. That is my sin. But he is very clear and very frank about the sexual dimensions of his visitor experiences, both conscious and unconscious.

Very recently in conversation with me for the book that we wrote together, he reflected on how his sexual encounters with the alien Her were

connected to and ghosted by his marriage and sexual experiences with his wife, Anne. Here is what he wrote in our book: "One way to put it would be to say that I had a love affair with a goddess. Another would be that it was an affair with an alien. But the third way to describe it, which is I suspect closer to the truth, is that I don't know who or what my wife really is, or myself, or any of us. I don't know what human beings are, and I suspect that that form is deceptive."

I do not think the conjugal context of this entire series of events can be overemphasized. It was Anne, for example, who suggested the first word of the book, which also became its central idea and theory: *Communion.* Strieber meant something very specific by this expression, which is his own unique take on what we might call mystical union. Toward the end of the book, Strieber reflects on the hidden communion that the couple felt in their marriage through this entire ordeal. The concept of communion, in other words, is built on a steadfast marriage and is a conjugal one at heart. It is about the cosmic nature of a loving and procreative heterosexuality.

This, I would add, makes Strieber's erotic mysticism a profoundly heretical or heterodox one within the Roman Catholicism of his youth and upbringing. There was a deeply ironic Catholic undertone, or undertow, to all of this. Communion, after all, signals the sacrament of the Eucharist for any Catholic reader. That is, it signals a sacramental or mystical union with a male deity, *not* a female one. This, I suspect, is another reason Strieber's experiences are so alien, so demonized, so othered in the public culture. They simply do not respect, or they openly violate, the sexual structure of the traditional monotheistic imagination in which the divine, of course, is almost always *male*.

Such a suggestion receives more than a little support from the fact that this communion first emerged in bed, literally. Just after reflecting on the conjugal context of the abduction events, Strieber describes an exchange that he and Anne had in bed sometime in April of 1986. Whitley was explaining to Anne how he wanted to title his new book "Body Terror," since that was what he had experienced on the night of December 26. But Anne would have none of it. This is Whitley now: "Suddenly Anne said in a strange basso profundo voice, 'The book must not frighten people. You should call it *Communion,* because that's what it is about.' I looked over at her, intending to say why I thought my title was better, and saw that she was

totally asleep." In other words, Anne channeled Whitley's most famous book title.

I could go on with these sexual and biological contexts, but I think I have made my point that there is something sexual and biological about the abduction experience, at least in this most iconic and important case.

In a fascinating moment of resonance or comparison, Strieber's experiences with the visitors suggested to him the same model of mind that Philip K. Dick had arrived at through his experience of VALIS, namely, that mind and the soul are something physical, something electromagnetic or plasmalike that is finally cosmic, and that we as individual body-brains are but local receivers or transducers of this cosmic presence. Here is Strieber commenting on the place of his visions and anomalous experiences in our book again: "I don't mean that it's entirely in the mind, but rather that the mind might not be entirely in us. In other words, that the mind might persist even outside the cradle of the brain. . . . What would such a mind be like, what would our part in it be, how would we communicate with it, and in so doing, to what degree would we be talking to ourselves?"

In dozens of other places in his numerous books Strieber writes of this cosmic mind interacting with us from the future in order to educate us, guide us, evolve us in this secret school we call life. He might as well be speaking and writing of Philip K. Dick's VALIS.

Finally, before I leave Whitley, let me observe that *Communion* is not just a book. It is also a mirror. After *Communion* hit the bestseller charts, it set off an avalanche of corresponding stories. Whitley made the honest mistake of putting his address in the back of the book. He thought maybe a few dozen people might want to correspond with him. Over the next few years, Strieber would receive *hundreds of thousands* of letters from individuals, who recognized either the iconic gray on the cover, or traces of their own spiritually traumatic experiences in his. Many of these readers believed that they had been abducted by aliens.

I recently helped create something we have called the "Archives of the Impossible" at Rice University within the Woodson Research Center, that is, our special collections unit in the university library. We have been collecting and archiving various materials on different paranormal aspects of American culture and history for about four years now. One of the jewels of this archival project is the Anne and Whitley Strieber Collection. This

collection, which consists of some-where between four and five thousand letters include the eight hundred or so letters that Anne had typed up and on which she based her own book, appropriately entitled *The Communion Letters*. I want to thank Whitley and Anne, profusely, for donating these letters to our Archives of the Impossible. Serious researchers can now come to Rice University and read these abduction accounts for themselves.

SPECIES OF GOD

My last case is Barbara Ehrenreich. In early May of 1958, a seventeen-year-old teenager named Barbara Ehrenreich went skiing on Mammoth Mountain in northern California. On the way home something would happen to her on the street of a little town called Lone Pine that would end up as her entire philosophical worldview.

Living with a Wild God is her profound and hilarious look back on her science training and this "life-changing epiphany," as she called it. Ehrenreich is a robust feminist social critic and American writer. She studied theoretical physics at Reed College and earned a Ph.D. in cell biology at Rockefeller University. She grew up in a passionately atheistic family, a fact signaled by stories like the time her dying grandmother threw a crucifix across the room when a local Catholic priest tried to give her the last rites. Trained in these family ways of fighting against all forms of authoritarianism, Ehrenreich would spend her professional life as a take-no-prisoners writer and social critic concerned about healthcare and poverty and as a social activist picketing and meeting for various feminist and economic justice causes. Lone Pine, however, continued to haunt her.

Even if she effectively suppressed what really happened to her for most of her life, she had known "an event so strange, so cataclysmic that I never in all the intervening years wrote or spoke about it." What was she supposed to say? She knew what she would sound like. She would sound like an abductee. "So, what do you do with something like this, an experience so anomalous, so disconnected with the normal life you share with other people that you can't even figure out how to talk about it? I was also, I have to admit, afraid of sounding crazy. Try inserting an account of a mystical experience into a conversation and you'll likely get the same

response as you would if you confided that you had been the victim of an alien abduction."

The reasons for Ehrenreich's embarrassment are simple enough. We have shamed these sorts of experiences. The traditional humanities reduce all of these encounters to anthropomorphic projection and local social and historical processes, effectively conflating all forms of consciousness with culture. Conventional science, on the other hand, conflates consciousness and cognition with the brain. As Ehrenreich has it, the sciences insist that the physical world consists only of "tiny dead things, mindless particles following their destinies," bouncing around in orderly ways to produce eventually *big* dead things that think that they are conscious agents but are really not.

Ehrenreich, who knows her science as well as anyone, rips into this scientific materialism and mechanism. She explains how the laboratory wants only to work with dead things and kills living things in order to experiment on them. She herself sacrificed twelve hundred mice as a young scientist. She even takes a humorous swat at one of the pillars of modern physics, the hallowed second law of thermodynamics, which states, in her own humorous translation, that in a closed system, "everything tends toward death or toward rot or at least toward extreme boringness." Then she goes further. The whole project of science, she explains, is to crush any notion of powerful nonhuman others, and the vocation of the scientist in her training was to "keep all that was uncanny or unspeakable stuffed out of sight." What to do, then, with her own perfectly empirical experiences that suggested, that *screamed* that the world is not dead at all, that it is in actual fact fiercely alive?

And so we come to Lone Pine. Ehrenreich is seventeen. She is with a group of friends, and they have just gone on a skiing trip in northern California. They have to drive all the way back to Los Angeles, which is in the southern part of the state. If you know California, you know that it is a very big state, so they're not going to make it in a day. They're kids, they have no money, they can't afford a motel, so they just pull the car over and sleep in the car.

It was not a good way to get any real rest. In the morning, Ehrenreich had not slept much the night before, nor had she eaten anything. In a state of sleep deprivation and hypoglycemia, that is, what she calls "the condition

that the Plains Indians sought in their vision quests," the young woman woke up and a took a walk through town. Or at least tried to do so. Suddenly, the physical world burst into living fire. She invokes the biblical burning bush to describe what she knew then, but there was little biblical, much less monotheistic, about the experience. Indeed, Ehrenreich makes it crystal clear throughout the book that she despises monotheism as a form of deicide or "god murder" that insists on killing the gods and leads eventually to modern science, which kills everything else. She doesn't pull many punches.

But nothing was really dead on the streets of Lone Pine on that fateful morning. *Nothing*. Everything was spirited; everything was alive. Even the teacups and the toasters in the shop window of the secondhand store were alive. Here are a few lines from her account: "The world flamed into life. . . . This was not the passive beatific merger with 'the all' as promised by the Eastern mystics. It was a furious encounter with a living substance that was coming at me through all things at once. Nothing could contain it. Everywhere, inside and out, the only condition was overflow."

Again, what could she say? "That I had been savaged by a flock of invisible angels, lifted up in a glorious flutter of iridescent feathers, then mauled, emptied of all intended purpose, and pretty much left for dead?"

Living with a Wild God was an attempt to describe this flock of mauling angels. She moves through a number of possibilities, but one of her most interesting moves comes at the very end of the book, when she invokes the VALIS experience of Philip K. Dick in order to suggest that what she experienced was a kind of biological god.

Dick, Ehrenreich points out, sensed that VALIS was a living creature, and his own metaphysical opening was experienced as a kind of interspecies symbiosis. Ehrenreich entertains the same notion now, wondering out loud to what extent that which overwhelmed her on that skiing trip was a biological species of some kind. She even asks, out loud, if such invisible beings feed on our forms of consciousness (a very common thought, by the way, in the abduction literature). At the end, Ehrenreich confesses that, thanks to her reading of history and theology, she is now ready to "acknowledge the possible existence of conscious beings—gods, spirits, extraterrestrials—that normally elude our senses, making themselves known to us only on their own whims and schedules, in the service of their

own agendas." This would be "a being no more visible to us than microbes would have been to Aristotle, that roams the universe seeking minds open enough for it to enter or otherwise contact."

THE TRICK OF THE TRUTH

What to say here at the end? I want to leave you with a few reflections on what we might call the paradoxical relationship between fiction and fact, between truth and trick, or if you will, the mediating nature of the human religious imagination. This question floated through our conversations this whole week.

Note, for example, how Dick, Strieber, and Ehrenreich are very much aware of how their religious experiences have been constructed by a whole range of psychological, political, economic, and ideological processes. They are not naive, they do not interpret their own revelations in literal terms. Philip K. Dick drew on every academic tool available to him in the 1970s in an attempt to analyze and explain VALIS for eight years. He never landed. He could never figure it out. Similarly, Whitley has consistently criticized the mythology of the invading alien as a dangerous Cold War Christian fantasy spun by powerful fundamentalist voices in the military and intelligence communities. Barbara Ehrenreich takes no prisoners in her passionate criticism of monotheism and scientific materialism, even as she analyzes in detail the physiological and psychological context of her own encounter.

In short, each of these figures displays the historical and critical sensibilities of the humanist scholar. But they also recognize that there was something *there,* behind and within and *because of* the visionary display. They also understand that this "there" cannot be fully explained away, that it overflows any and all representations, and that it is *big*. I confess to being left in a similar paradoxical space. I see here a series of modern, postmodern, or supermodern religious experiences that are clearly scripted. But scripted *upon* something. I am left with three professional writers who have been written, and then write about being written so that we might all be written anew. I have called such zapped writers "authors of the impossible." The historian of religions Erik Davis has called this reflective critical nature of these scripted loops "high weirdness."

Erik sees this high weirdness arising in the 1970s in a group of countercultural authors, specifically Robert Anton Wilson, Philip K. Dick (again), Terence and Dennis McKenna, and John Lilly, each of whom were responding to popular culture, psychedelics, and the networked digital age on the horizon.

Such reflexive loops, I must add, also reflect ancient sensibilities in comparative mystical literature, which were often in deep conversation with cutting-edge philosophical currents, hence the epigraph from Meister Eckhart with which Whitley and I began our recent book, "The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me." Hence also, the owl eye of our cover staring back at our readers' eye in a visual loop. Each of our three authors discussed here performs this same reflexive weirdness. Each knows that she or he is scripted, and that there is something, or someone, beyond the script. Each tries, moreover, to take some control or authority over this scripting through—what else?—more scripting, that is, more writing.

Perhaps Whitley has put it most provocatively. I still remember well what he said to a group of us after he explained the cinematic shape of his visitor experiences and how these encounters were visually rooted in the bad sci-fi movies of his boyhood. He said something along these lines: "I know, of course, that my visitor encounters were imaginatively shaped by the bad science fiction movies of my boyhood and youth in the 1950s. The proper response, of course, is not to deny any of this. The proper response is *to make better science fiction movies* so that we can have better and more productive experiences of the visitors in the future."

Just think about that. That is the reflexive loop of what Erik calls high weirdness. That is the new cosmic humanism on the horizon that seeks to understand and write itself. That is how an author of the impossible thinks and writes.

RETURN TO ORIGINS

As a way of ending, let us return to the beginning, to Mr. Arnold's sighting in June of 1947 that did so much to catalyze and spark the whole techno-mythology of the UFO. In a recent interview with Paolo Leopizzi Harris, Kim Arnold has stated fairly clearly that one of the hidden secrets of her

father's literary remains is that he witnessed the flying objects "pulsating with a blue white light," like a heartbeat. He eventually concluded that the saucers were "not mechanical in any sense at all," that is, that *they were alive,* that they could change their density, and that they came from another dimensional world, which is the same one we enter when we die. In our own terms, we might say that Ken Arnold's original flying saucer vision was not about technology at all. It was about eschatology.

Kim Arnold has also spoken about the telepathic gifts and reincarnation beliefs of her mother and what historians of religions would recognize immediately as a theosophical framework in which her father and mother understood these historical sightings and their cultural aftermath. Kim Arnold has also spoken at length about how the events stressed and strained their family, mostly because of the way her father's experiences were mangled by the media, by Hollywood, and by the debunkers, but also because of the endless phone calls and some ten thousand letters that her father received. (We might recall Whitley's letters here.) She has also noted how her father was threatened by a government agent and warned not to speak about what he saw. Kim describes in some detail how both of her parents spent the rest of their lives in fear of being killed by the U.S. government, whose intelligence agency appears to have manipulated and harassed the Arnolds for its own security purposes.

And there we have it. A vision of living beings in the sky emerging from some other dimension, misreported and misperceived as flying machines likened to a little plate for your tea or coffee and immediately mixed up with the Air Force, Cold War intelligence, the politics of the security state, thousands of other visionary and erotic encounters, and an entire new demonology of invading extraterrestrials. Where to start, where to begin anew?

DISCUSSION OF

Biological Gods: Science (Fiction) and Some Emergent Mythologies

JEFFREY KRIPAL: The main idea of *Authors of the Impossible* is that if you look close enough at the history of the paranormal, you will see that it has everything to do with language. For example, we still speak of psychical readings, they talked about automatic writing in the nineteenth century, and if you look at things like synchronicities, you will notice that they often involve puns or plays on words. So the basic idea of that book was that if you approach the paranormal as something you have to prove or explain with some kind of causal model, you're going to be frustrated. But if you approach the paranormal as a sign or message or a form of communication, you can expect to be relatively successful. So again, what I am really proposing here is a humanities approach to the paranormal that looks at the paranormal as a series of physical signs or material symbols to decipher and not as a collection of simple objects or material causal processes to prove or disprove. Dick didn't think in those terms, but he understood VALIS as completely involved with his writing practice. When VALIS beamed into him, he reread all of his previous novels as intuiting what would eventually manifest as VALIS, and the last novels he wrote were all about trying to get VALIS on the page in these last three science fiction novels. He believed that when the right reader picked up one of these paperbacks, that this plasmate embedded or coded in his words, as it were, could somehow get into this reader, and then turn him or her into a homoplasmate, essentially a deified human being. He had a very, very occult understanding of language and story. So do I.

WHITLEY STRIEBER: I've heard this lecture before, but every time I hear it, I hear it anew, and I thank you for it very much, Jeff. Most of you probably aren't aware that on Sunday night the largest news show in the States had on it a man named Robert Bigelow, who is a billionaire interested in space science and who is working and has been working with the so-called government insiders, many of whom Jeff and I know. And they really don't know very much more about this than we do, in fact probably less in some respects. In any case, he announced on the show, "Aliens are real, they are here, and I don't care what anyone thinks about what I just said." Now, what does that mean? Obviously, it does not mean, and I'm quite sure Jeff 's thrust is right, what Robert Bigelow thinks it means. That's actually where we are, but now that Mr. Bigelow has spoken out, the assumption that aliens from another planet have landed here is likely to become ingrained in stone.

But what stone is it? We're going to try to speak out against it, but it is like speaking against the flow of the tide, and my question to you, Jeff, is this: Is there any way that you know of interrupting the energy of folklore with the tide as high as this? Because we have done this over the course of human history again and again and again to absolutely no effect.

KRIPAL: Well, that's a depressing question.

[audience laughter]

You know, this is why we wrote our book, which, of course, was ignored because we tried to intervene in that conversation and say basically, "Beware of these beliefs, and be suspicious or be skeptical of the skepticism. The truth of the thing is much stranger than either of those easy paths." I don't know if there's anything else we can do, other than to write and to speak out. My sense of it, though, after talking about this topic in public in many, many different contexts, is that there are actually a lot of really smart people out there, and they are suspicious of the two extremes, and they're looking for a better answer, which doesn't really exist in the media at the moment, as you know better than anyone. So, I don't know, as intellectuals and writers we're always working upstream, but I don't know what else to do, other than continue doing what we do, which is to write and to speak. It's not very effective, but I think that's all we can do.

STRIEBER: Yeah. Maybe I'll get taken aboard a flying saucer, delivered to another planet . . .

KRIPAL: I'll tell you a story. You've heard this one, Whitley, but the group hasn't. I hosted for four years an annual symposia series at Esalen on the paranormal and popular culture. We invited a number of folks, including from Los Angeles and Hollywood, who are involved in making these mega blockbuster movies, which clearly do get into the public bloodstream. Basically, the question we kept asking them was this: "Can you people make a film about the paranormal that doesn't involve men punching each other and things blowing up?" And they basically said, "No." We had collected all these historians of psychical research and the paranormal. We had all kinds of ideas for all kinds of historical films they could do and

present this material as a real aspect of human experience—*real,* not as fantasy. And, basically, what they said is that they couldn't do this because they knew what made money, and they were going to keep doing that until it stopped making money. That was basically their answer. And because blockbusters now cost upward of hundreds of millions of dollars because of the special effects they use, it just locks out all of this creativity, and it ensures a kind of rote formula that they just use over and over and over again. A lot of it feeds right into this alien invasion myth, which just feeds right into the military, which just feeds right into this Christian fundamentalist fantasy, because that's what sells.

RORY SPOWERS: I've only just realized that I read your early book about Ramakrishna. But also what you said about the Meister Eckhart quote at the end and some of the stuff you wrapped up with at the end reminded me of Ramana Maharshi being asked if the gods and goddesses were real and him saying that they are as real as you are. But, this is not so much a question, but it feeds into what you were talking about, and Chris as well, and maybe Michael, about phenomenality and numinality. I think you can also potentially posit a theory about the DMT experience compared to the 5-MeO experience, where the DMT experience is the ultimate experience of phenomenality and you have these extraordinary encounters with all these entities and gods and goddesses, but that completely collapses within the 5-MeO experience where you're just disembodied and in the immersive white light and oceanic experience. And when you break or punch through that, the experience just goes, and you're just left in the void. I'm just wondering whether, as we come to the end of this sort of egoic separatist culture, it's almost concomitant with that—that we have the increasing emergence of these sort of phenomena, and actually ultimately when we recognize that what we are *is* this matrix within which all of this functions, that these will become almost a moot point anyway, and they'll all just sort of collapse, and that they are basically just dependent upon our sort of separatist ego or identified sense of consciousness. It's not a question, I don't know if you've got any comment on it. I'm just throwing it out there for discussion.

KRIPAL: I wish *that* voice was in the media and the film industry. It's just so childish, it's just so silly, what's being propounded.

Dennis McKenna: Yeah, this is kind of the second time I've seen this presentation because you gave it in Hawaii, and it's good to see it a second time. I was thinking, I don't know exactly how to put this because it sounds like self-promotion, which it's not intended to be, but I think you have to write another book, Jeff! Because as I reflect on the many things about the book, the things that you and Whitley wrote that were very striking and helped re-educate me in my thinking about this paranormal thing, I'm much more prepared to accept that there are physical aspects to the mind and so on. But there's a chapter in there entitled "The Soul Is a UFO," and when I stumbled on that chapter, my jaw completely dropped, because what happened to Terry and me at La Chorrera was exactly what you're talking about. I never really thought of it in those terms, but what happened was essentially a contactee experience, right? We went down there looking for some drug, and we didn't find it. We found another drug, which happened to be psilocybin. We ate far too much of it in a short period of time. We started downloading information about how to build our own bodies and DNA and minds into a UFO. That was exactly what it was. It was downloading the blueprints for an experiment that would cause this transformation. And, you know, we didn't have critical faculties. We were accepting all this. We performed the experiment, and of course, it failed, right, because it would have collapsed the spacetime continuum and a number of other inconvenient things.

[audience laughter]

So, of course, the experiment couldn't turn out the way it was supposed to. But what did happen was that it gave us a complex of ideas that took a long time to work out. And it gave us, as you often hear in UFO contact experiences where the aliens give something to the contactee, they show them a book, or they give them an object, right? So, our experiment, though it's not an experiment in any scientific sense, but we called it that, that's what it's become in myth. We actually came away from that experience shaken for sure, probably half-crazy, but we took two technologies away from it. It gave us two gifts. One was we figured out how to grow the mushrooms a few years later. We took spores back, we developed a very simple way to grow the mushrooms, and we unleashed those on the world,

you know, and that actually brought psilocybin into mainstream culture. Our motivation for that was not mercenary. I mean, there was that aspect, but that wasn't the reason to do it. The reason was we wanted to give simple technologies for everyone to grow mushrooms so people could take the mushrooms and verify that we were either nuts or there was really something out there, you know. And it turns out it's the latter. People took these mushrooms, they have these crazy experiences, and they created this sort of consensus about these other dimensions.

The other thing that we brought back, or I should say the thing that was downloaded to Terence, not me, because I was cruising the cosmos—I was like the antenna for this information—what Terence was getting either through me or through some other direct channel was these ideas about time, which eventually ended up being what he codified into "timewave zero," which was a theory about the structure of time. And, again, we postulated a lot of things about the structure of spacetime, which, I mean, I'm a debunker of timewave zero, I don't believe in it, and in fact, its most definitive test failed spectacularly. It did not work. But it's a very strange piece of mathematics and thinking. It's like an alien artifact, and it got me wondering: What do you make of that? Does this thing actually do anything? And I don't say that it does, and I don't say that it doesn't. But the interesting thing here about the contact, the abduction aspect of it, was that we came back from La Chorrera, and I was very much invested in getting my feet on the ground. In fact, that was why I went into science really fairly heavily after that. It was like, "I don't want anything to do with this, I'm just going to study plants and chemistry, and just leave me alone," you know! Terence persisted for years with timewave zero, defending it, talking about it, being obsessed with it essentially, and I think, only in later years of his life did he ever really have any doubts about it.

So, in some ways you could say we share something with your cases. Oh, and then there was this phenomenon, of course: We both went crazy simultaneously, so it's that classic *folie a deux* kind of thing, if you want to call it crazy, but prolonged altered states that were complementary. And, in some ways, you could say when we returned from La Chorrera, it changed us forever. I've said this many times. Our lives were changed. There was pre La Chorrera and there was post La Chorrera. Everything we've done since has been in the shadow of La Chorrera. But in some sense, you could say, Terence never recovered, and I guess I did. Maybe damaged, maybe

better, maybe damaged, but I sort of returned to consensus reality, and at least in Terence's mind he persisted in his belief that timewave zero was valid, that the effects that we predicted did work and were going to happen. Our only mistake was predicting *when*. And timewave zero became a tool for predicting *when*. First it was the next year, then when the comet came, then on and on, eventually December 21, 2012, which was comfortably out of reach. But he really stuck to that idea for a long time, and I think he sincerely believed it and maybe only in the last few years of his life did he really question it, when other people, mathematicians and so on, began to question the assumptions behind it. But it seems like it fits into this cultural mythology in a certain way. So, you catch the drift about what I'm saying. What do you think about all that?

[audience laughter]

KRIPAL: OK. What do I think about all of what?

MCKENNA: It may be a new book, but that experience of the paranormal, whether drug induced or not, had two very specific effects, one of which did affect society in a fairly important way.

KRIPAL: I think the question is really complicated because Whitley and I *do* interact with people who are at the very top in their fields in science and technology, and they *do* attribute their discoveries and the technologies that come up to these entities or to this interaction. And these are some of the most successful scientists in the world in their fields. And, from the history of religions, I can tell you that things like agriculture and writing, things we don't think of as technology but clearly were at the time, were always attributed to the gods. They always came from somewhere else. So I think human beings actually do receive technological knowledge from sources that they understand as the gods, or in this case, aliens or extraterrestrials. But again, that doesn't mean that I believe in the gods or aliens or extraterrestrials; I think that's how the religious imagination works. It needs something like that to download this whatever-this-is, this set of intuitions. And I think often it is a set of intuitions that you then need to work out in rational, very linear, very difficult ways over a lifetime. So, I think it's complicated, and I think if you interpret the UFO phenomena as *only*

subjective, you will constantly hit a wall when it gets hard [i.e., physical]. And if you interpret it as a hard spaceship, you constantly hit a wall that it's soft, or it's visionary, and it's that kind of both/and that *fascinates* me so much. It really doesn't fit. Anywhere.

McKenna: A further sort of addendum to that I guess is that, being that the experiment of La Chorrera is well known and a lot of people know of us, I still get emails from people who say that, "I've replicated what you've done, I know how to do what you've done. I can sing, I can make the song, I have paranormal abilities because of practicing these things." You can always tell because these are always block paragraphs. There's never any punctuation. It's obviously just a download directly from their unconscious, and it's usually like, "Well how come you've abandoned this, why don't you write back to me," and I'm like, What am I supposed to say?

[audience laughter]

So, there is that, and maybe there are people out there who have gotten further than we did, I don't know, and I'm not sure I want to know.

Kripal: I think the big problem here is we don't understand this because we haven't tried. And by that, I don't mean people in this room haven't tried. I mean as a whole culture we have not invested in trying to understand this set of phenomena. If you're in the hard sciences in a university, sometimes those disciplines have gone through a dozen or so generations and are getting millions and millions of dollars every few decades, and they're trying to replicate each other's work and push each other, and there's this machine that's pushing the project forward. We don't have any of that in this area. We don't have disciplines dedicated to this. Like these four or five thousand letters that Anne and Whitley have given our Archives of the Impossible. How am I going to work on that? I can't read all five thousand and locate the patterns, like Eliade did with the *Shamanism* book, for example. I don't have the time. Graduate students? How do you do that? We don't have the resources to even begin to understand this. And, honestly, I don't know if we want to understand it, as a culture now, because I think the answers, some of them anyway, will be very difficult.

DAVID LUKE: Luis Luna has got someone analyzing one thousand ayahuasca trip reports he has collected over the years.

LUIS LUNA: You have to find somebody to transcribe all that and then type it, et cetera.

ANTON BILTON: I've got two questions. The first regards the cultural conditioning of the abductee experiences, from an alien perspective, and I think Orson Wells perhaps has a lot to do with this. This notion of abduction is not a new thing. You could have been abducted by fairies in the Middle Ages as lots of people have talked about. Being taken away to another world, being examined, in fear, something you didn't expect. But, equally, the sensation that I've had in many, many ayahuasca trips is that I'm being examined, that someone's working on my etheric body, healing me, looking at me, showing me things. The experience is comparable to what these people describe as alien abduction. The only difference is I went in there willingly to try to have that experience, whereas they got this experience spontaneously and not wanting it. So, is there some type of possible endogenous DMT release in the unsuspecting person that triggers that?

Question number two, slightly more sinister, I don't like talking about it very much, but I have had the thing you alluded to, this sort of harvesting notion. That actually we could be, or some of us may be being harvested for devouring by an alternate alien race. And I don't think, if I use the word *alien,* that any of it involves anything physical. We seem to focus, these days, on transportation as a vehicle to get from A to B. I think all these things come through a different dimension when they arrive, a mindspace dimension. But this notion of, perhaps, an alternate species devouring souls, which seems to come up—and, unfortunately, I had it a couple of times without having read about it, which was a shock, and subsequently I've read about it—what are your thoughts on that?

KRIPAL: Well first of all, these abductions are not new at all. I mean, this is religion. One definition of religion is "weird beings come from the sky and screw with people." That's religion! And that has always been religion! And that's why you really can't understand this phenomenon if you don't know something about the history of religions. But this same realization

also, in some ways, normalizes the experiences. It is somehow reassuring because we're still here, they haven't consumed us, and we've been having these experiences for millennia. So there's something about them that's very ordinary and normal.

The other thing you hint at in your second question, and we discuss this in the book, is another thing that I think is really important. When ordinary people on the street think of the holy or the sacred, they think of the good. They think a religious experience is always an encounter with something gentle and beneficent and can go up on a three-year-old child's wall, a kitten or an angel or something. But, in fact, if you look at the history of human beings encountering the sacred, it's terrifying often, certainly in the Bible. You don't want to see God, and you sure in the hell don't want to touch God, because if you do, you're dead. So, historically speaking now, there's been this notion that the sacred is this incredible power or energy in the environment that we need and that we are related to somehow, and yet we want to keep at bay because it's so powerful and terrifying. I think a lot of that is a function of human psychology, frankly. In individuals who are not ready to be dissolved or not ready to enter that, it's a terrifying experience. For those who are, it can be very positive and ecstatic. But it depends on the psyche of the individual. Hence the double nature of the sacred as positive *and* negative, or both at the same time, in the history of religions.

Unfortunately, what happens in history is those negative experiences get literally demonized. So those are demons. Those are beings who are sinister and who are after us and therefore anything having to do with this is bad. As opposed to the "good" experience, which must have been an angel. So people don't generally have the sense of the sacred as this dual kind of *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. They have this very simplistic notion of the divine as only the good. Whereas, if we were working with richer notions, we could take in the terrifying experience and the ecstatic experiences and really see them as two sides of the same coin. Again, we just don't have that sophistication yet. It's not there. In terms of—Are they eating us?—well, obviously, I don't know, but my assumption is no, they are not, because we're here. We would be long gone if something that powerful and that omniscient wanted to eat us. Seen any Dodo birds or wild bison recently?

Bill Richards: Maybe they're just nibbling!

[audience laughter]

Michael Winkelman: My chicken said the same thing, "A few of us disappeared, but we're still OK!"

[audience laughter]

Kripal: It's true, it's true . . .

Strieber: It's possible for it to be terrifying and ecstatic.

Ede Frecska: Yes, because the most important lesson from your presentation for me reassured me that any time we enter the paranormal or the mystery beyond, we enter the territory of the trickster. We must always maintain our doubt—and even the best forget it. See, Terence forgot it because he was totally fixated on timewave zero, and Chris Bache, I missed a pinch of doubt in his presentation. This is the realm of the trickster. So, the best of us, and the best of the best, Parmenides, who came up with the importance of logical argumentation, he had it in his visions, and he had the doubt because finally he said, "Mortals cannot know the final truth until after death."

Kripal: One book I always recommend is by a parapsychologist and stage magician named George Hansen called *The Trickster and the Paranormal*. It's one of the best things ever written on the topic. This is his argument essentially, that the paranormal is structurally antistructural.

Frecska: Easy to forget!

Kripal: And if you forget that, you will be tricked, and you will pay at some point for getting involved in this particular endeavor.

CHAPTER 11

Initiation, Spiritual Science, and the Limits of Reason

Daniel Pinchbeck

So, I thought I would maybe talk a little bit about my own life and experience. Obviously, it's been really fascinating to listen to this symposium and think about the subjects that it raises. Personally, in my own life, my first book *Breaking Open the Head* was about psychedelic shamanism and in a sense I put myself on a kind of initiation path. I started off as a scientific materialist and a skeptic and I ended up going to West Africa, to Gabon, to take iboga in the Bwiti initiation. I visited a tribe in the Amazon, the Secoya, taking ayahuasca, and it was very lucky to find this ancient tradition that they had. I visited the Mazatec where the magic mushrooms were rediscovered in the 1950s by the West. I also write about the modern psychedelic world, such as Sasha Shulgin, and I ended up going to Burning Man and discovering this whole modern psychedelic subculture, which I didn't really know about growing up in New York as a journalist. And I had, along the way, some extreme psychic, psychophysical experiences that shifted my whole worldview and helped to shape my way of thinking about the nature of reality, which for me, I see in more of an occult or alchemical way. I felt very relieved by Angela's talk in a way. It alleviated this innate anxiety that I have, that these things are only addressed in a scientific way. I feel that this kind of Neoplatonic view of the

nature of reality is a crucial one, this understanding around the imagination and so on.

I had one experience working with a substance called dipropyltryptamine (DPT), which is a chemical analogue of dimethyltryptamine, where I felt as if I had a spirit possession or temporary kind of communion with an entity from another dimension that caused psychophysical phenomena that I wrote about in *Breaking Open the Head,* from mirrors falling off the walls to some stuff that was quite dangerous, and it seemed, in a way, to change my understanding, my capacities in certain respects. That's one piece of the puzzle for me. I also experienced iboga as a kind of entity, a paternal spirit in a sense, that spoke in ceremony to me. Ayahuasca often appears as a female spirit so I think there's a fascinating area of inquiry for humanity here. I think we're really only at the beginning of a great quest.

I think we have to think about the limits of enlightenment, the limits of science, and scientific knowledge. I was remembering George Bataille, the French thinker who explored this. He wrote a little essay called *Rotten Sun,* and this is just a quote from him.

> The Sun, from the human point of view (in other words, as it is confused with the notion of noon), is the most elevated conception. It is also the most abstract object, since it is impossible to look at fixedly at that time of day. If we describe the notion of the sun in the mind of one whose weak eyes compel him to emasculate it, that sun must be said to have the poetic meaning of mathematical serenity and spiritual elevation. If on the other hand one obstinately focuses on it, a certain madness is implied, and the notion changes meaning because it is no longer production that appears in light, but refuse or combustion, adequately expressed by the horror emanating from a brilliant arc lamp. In practice the scrutinized sun can be identified with a mental ejaculation, foam on the lips and an epileptic crisis, in the same way that the preceding sun (the one not looked at) is perfectly beautiful, the one that is scrutinized can be considered as horribly ugly.

We have this idea of the sun of reason, the enlightenment and so on, but then that's sort of our abstract conception. When you actually try and look into the sun madness is threatened. Van Gogh looks at it, goes mad, and cuts off his ear or whatever. When we think about the structure of our reality, there's the sun and the moon, and something that I always think about is how strange it is that we're able to have perfect eclipses. I haven't heard any scientific explanation for why that should be the case. I mean, the sun and the moon are the same size in the sky exactly, so it allows for perfect eclipses, while the sun is forty times larger than the moon and forty times farther away. What's the probability of this? Is it a kind of hint or tell or clue that we don't live in just a scientifically measurable, accidentally constructed universe, but that there's a kind of mythopoetic underpinning to reality, that the universe is some kind of artistic construction, artistic whole?

As Angela was talking about yesterday, I think we have to think about the imagination in a deeper way, and I love these two quotes: from William Blake, "The human imagination is not a state, it is the human existence itself," and Patrick Harper who is a brilliant thinker, who I know Rory had invited here on these subjects, who wrote, "Memory is the form imagination takes when it wishes to impress us with its reality."

Just to delve into Patrick Harper's ideas a little bit, what he essentially did in his work is he turned the lens around and instead of looking at myth-based and shamanic cultures from a scientific and anthropology perspective, he looks at our scientific and anthropological and rational system of thought and constructs from the esoteric or myth-based perspectives. He writes for instance, "The world we see is always the myth that we are in," and science itself for him is a modern myth. Here's a quote that I really love from him:

> The picture of the lowly scientist braving an alien universe is a heroic myth. Other myths, even heroic ones, consider the myth of Odysseus, show us that we are far from being alone. We are embraced by a network of relations, not just with living family and friends but also with helpful demons and protective gods, nature is not indifferent and dead but animate, personified, and kindly, even the universe can be as it was for the medieval age, full of gods and blazing with light, rather than Pascal's silent spaces. In short, it is

> the heroic modern ego that feels itself to be alone, and the empty, hostile universe is a reflection of it.

For Patrick Harper this idea that we're simply constructing the "other" world as just an idea, or a concept, and actually if you look at mythological sources and so on, it's more that the other world may construct or create us. It's only our technical powers of the last century that kind of fool us into believing that we have a mastery over it.

Harper writes, "Through our conscious process, to a certain extent, but much more through our subconscious processes we have co-creatively manifested the world we currently share. As part of our modern myth, the story in which we have unconsciously chosen to live, we deny the capacities of the psyche, the existence of demonic realms and the other worlds. By denying these forces we empower them to take on new, dangerous, trickster forms that increasingly threaten us, that could literally submerge and destroy us."

One of my great heroes, and it's kind of beautiful for me to invoke him in this surrounding with the theosophy temples on site, is Rudolf Steiner, who I feel is a vastly underappreciated philosopher and thinker, in terms of what it might mean to construct a postmodern inquiry into the invisible realms or the spiritual realms. I feel that his whole way of thinking needs to be reintegrated. Not that everything that he said is useful, and you know, he was a product of his own time, and his language is cumbersome, maybe, from our perspective, but there were many amazing and beautiful insights that he had. And even his approach to knowledge is very fascinating, which he laid out in his first book *The Philosophy of Freedom,* which is actually a refutation of Kantian dualism. Michael [Winkelman] was talking the other day about the noumena and the phenomena, but Steiner would argue that, actually, even the thought that there are things outside our ability to know them is only a thought that we're having, so ultimately it comes back to monism rather than dualism. I recommend that book. I think it's a very systemic refutation of Kantian dualism.

So, Steiner was a unique character. He was Austrian, born in 1861, and as a child he was able to just see into these visionary realms. From our scientific perspective we might say that maybe he had an active pineal gland, or the capacity to access the kinds of experiences that we need DMT

or ayahuasca to access. And he quickly realized that nobody around him had those capacities anymore, except he found one old gardener who had this ability to see nature spirits and so on. He realized that it didn't make sense to talk about this as it made him look kooky, so he was quiet about it, he continued his investigations secretly, and he waited until he was forty years old and had gotten a doctorate in philosophy and was actually in charge of Goethe's science papers before he began to discuss his visionary knowledge.

Steiner saw the development of modern science as necessary for humanity. On the one hand it had blocked these atavistic capacities, our visionary capacities, but, somehow, he realized that it was necessary for humanity, from his perspective, so that we can develop enough of an independent, coherent, stable state of consciousness or being, so that we could then return to these spiritual realms with full clarity. He believed that the eventual destiny of humanity was to make that return in consciousness. He sought to develop a spiritual science appropriate for the modern era, for the modern psyche. He wrote about it very deeply in books like *An Outline of Esoteric Science,* and so on. He believed that we had supersensible organs of cognition and perception that we could develop through different exercises. He talked about, for instance, imagination and inspiration and intuition being higher-order mental faculties that we could access.

Actually Steiner, from his visionary investigation, believed that he had been sent to Earth in his incarnation with a mission, and that mission was to bring the knowledge of reincarnation back to the West, which we had lost with the rise of Christianity. He said that not only do individuals incarnate again and again—and actually he wrote a series of books, *Karmic Relationships,* where he followed different individualities through history—but also that the Earth itself reincarnates and we're currently in the fourth incarnation of Earth.

When I wrote my second book, *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl,* I found this quite resonant and fascinating because many of the indigenous cultures talk about the fourth world and the fifth world. The Hopis talk about it in a similar way, and I don't think he even knew about this. Steiner studied theosophy, and then he separated himself from it and created anthroposophy, his own school for esoteric development, which was a white occultist movement. The one thing that gives a good indication that he's a

useful thinker is that he created enduring institutions that still have a positive impact on the world today, such as Waldorf schools and biodynamic farming. I think that gives him a lot of credence in a sense.

We were talking about higher dimensions and entities from other realities and so on, and Steiner believed that, as human beings, these supersensible beings are working on us all of the time. In many cases some were benevolent—like guardian angels and so on—but some were also more malevolent and they sought to deviate us into different paths that were bad for our development. For him the two main types of these beings were Lucifer and Armon. Steiner really offers a multidimensional mapping of these supersensible realms or other dimensions that he believes permeate this one. He argues that there are these occult or spiritual entities, "powers and principalities" from the Bible, that work upon us and through us at all times. Instead of the biblical devil, Steiner names two of these forces or types of being Lucifer and Armon.

As an esoteric Christian, Steiner believed that the Christ event was important and necessary in human evolution. He believed that Christ doesn't just save our selves through a faith or belief in him, but that Christ was actually showing us a model or path for walking the balance beam between these opposing forces that seek to drag us into these different negative outcomes, in a sense. *Lucifer* the word actually means "light bringer," for Steiner, and is a force that seeks to carry us up and away from the Earth, toward beauty, artistic genius, glamor but also hubris and arrogance that disconnects us from the Earth. I've been going to the Burning Man festival for many years, and in a way, I see Burning Man as very Luciferic. Psychedelics can have that impact also, where they make people full of beauty and excitement, but make them lose their mooring or connection. I would say that this kind of Luciferic inspiration Steiner also talks about as daimonic, in the same way Angela was talking about yesterday. Almost that the daimon is maybe an outside being that brings us inspiration, so you could talk about somebody who is possessed by genius, they are actually working with Luciferic spirits or inspirations. In Ancient Greece, men would have their little altar to their daimon, which they recognized as the spirit to their genius and inspiration. Maybe they knew something that we don't at this point. For Steiner, he believed that these Luciferic spirits had reached a point in their own evolution where they were too advanced to be able to take physical bodies, yet they still needed to

evolve and they could only evolve by making an alliance with a human being.

So Armon is from Zoroastrianism. It means the "evil earth spirit," and so it's an occult being or force that leads us toward materialism, sterility, material technologies. I would say the grays, the alien abduction beings so many people encounter, represent a kind of Armonic force of entities. This is all kind of a mapping. This is actually my understanding of what's happening. I don't expect everyone to share it, but I offer it as a kind of map or a way of looking at it. So, different aspects of the grays, they seem to bring people into a lower frequency of consciousness. They exist between the material and the immaterial world in a strange way. They make pacts with governments, they trade technology transfer for the rights to abduct human beings. I mean, this is all the mythology or the legend around them. To me it suggests a very Armonic intervention. Armon is marked by cynicism, nihilism, excessive greed, the naked worship of power. I would say the Illuminati, the Skull and Bones, Adam Weishaupt, that whole kind of underground occult element is very Armonic—I mean, the thing about Armon as the being of scientific materialism and its reductive form, in a sense, and Steiner also believed that the twenty-first century would see what he called the incarnation of Armon, with Armon reaching its full ascendency—I think when you think about the development of a sentient AI or the singularity, that that may be the kind of thing he was talking about.

When I think about the broader issue of what's happening, having had my own path of initiation, which I describe in *Breaking Open the Head* and *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl,* and realizing how extraordinary are these experiences, adventures of the psyche that people can have that most people are denied having by the culture that they're embedded in, the tension is between the culture of initiation and a culture based on indoctrination. Unfortunately, our society, mass society, is largely a culture of indoctrination—indoctrination through religious structures, through governments, through mass media that seeks to control and dominate the human mind. A very useful book in this regard is by John Lash, *Not in His Image*. Essentially Lash believes that Christianity was an intentional deviation from humanity's proper path of spiritual and occult development that was actually devised by devious off-planet entities that he calls Archons, from the Gnostics, and the Archons actually carefully engineered a distortion where they shifted Christ's original message, which you can

read in the Gnostic gospels, that was "Open the door for yourself; the only knowledge that you can trust is the knowledge that you find for yourself," to a whole system based on faith and belief and morality and so on.

The Gnostics were not just a heretical sect of Christianity; they were the holders of the ancient mystery school system wisdom who tried to sound the alarm about the rise of Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries and ended up getting burned at the stake and so on. Then there have been different efforts in the West to kind of revive an initiation culture and initiation practices. The Rosicrucians were one of those efforts in the seventeenth century, and alchemy has been another one. Considering the crisis that we're in currently, it may be that it's time for another shot. Maybe humanity is ready for it at this point because we're seeing so many openings that are happening, that are really quite extraordinary. In the second book I wrote, *2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl,* I explored this idea that there is some validity to these indigenous prophecies and ways of understanding this time as a transition between one world to the next, one dimension to the next, one state of being to the next. I had many discussions with people around here, about 2012, which some people feel was disappointing, nothing happened.

You know Terence [McKenna] had this idea that it was going to be this sudden drastic shift, but I would offer the question to everybody: Is there significant change happening that suggests that we are in this transition, between cycles or forms of time? Is our civilization activating this archetype of the apocalypse? Which is what Carl Jung foresaw back in the 1950s, in books like *The Flying Saucer Myth*. That word, *apocalypse,* which literally means "disclosure of knowledge," "revealing," "unveiling," "revelation." Are we in fact undergoing some type of dimensional shift? Not as abrupt as Terence McKenna or José Argüelles might have anticipated, but something that's ongoing and deepening nonetheless.

And is this ongoing shift characterized perhaps by a shift that changed the nature of the psyche? Much like Chris Bache was discussing yesterday with his sense of where this unfolding of humanity could take us. Is it something like what Carl Jung talked about as the coming of the self into conscious realization? Is this shift also marked by a change in our awareness of time? This is something I explored in depth in the *2012* book, the current idea of a time shift from linear progression to what Jean Gebser

and the ever-present origin talked about as an integral structure of time that realizes that there are all these different times happening simultaneously—the ever-present origin of the aboriginal time, the mystical times of these great cycles, and then also the historical time of the modern world—and somehow by recognizing they're all happening simultaneously we have what Gebser talks about as a time freedom.

I wanted to point out the work of Sergio Magaña, who's a very interesting Toltec shaman. Magaña has written a few books where he talks about the time between 2012 and 2021 as a transition between the fifth sun and the sixth sun. He talks about the fifth sun, which was a sun of light where the waking consciousness, clarity, reason, and science predominated, and he believes that we are shifting into a sixth sun, which is more of a sun of darkness, characterized by dream, psychic phenomena, and so on. Once again, these are just models, and I think it's useful to have different maps and models just as thinking about things that are happening is useful, but I do find this to be very intriguing as a concept, even when I think about things that are happening, like Trump's victory, right? The Trump victory is a dreamlike phenomenon, like even his name Trump, you know the trump card that trumps the death. Even the name of his Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, like you can shorten that to T-Rex, so it feels like something is happening on the level of pun and tricksterism that suggests that it's almost a dreamlike reality that is emerging, in the way that the trickster is designed to mock the rational mind and undermine our ideas of what's constructive.

Then we also see this growth of interest in the simulation hypothesis, from a technological and scientific standpoint. So now you have Elon Musk and this Cambridge philosopher Nick Bostrom basically arguing that we could actually establish that the universe is some kind of simulation that even pixelates out at tiny scales. Then there's another phenomenon, the growth of interest in synchronicity and the growth in awareness of it. Mark Twain, back at the turn of the century, had written this journal essay where, "I'm noting all these synchronicities, but I must be crazy because nobody else even notices them." And then you have Carl Jung writing about it and F. David Peat, the physicist, finding that synchronicity is a kind of acausal altering principle. Then you had Sting writing a hit song about synchronicity, and now it's so commonplace that people are having these experiences, and that, to me, is part of this shift in the realization of the psyche, in a way. Many people, including myself, have 11:11 experiences.

And then recently there's been a lot of interest in the Mandela effect; people can check that out. Basically, there's this internet movement where they're realizing that there are these little shifts in the past that almost suggest that we are branching on to alternative timelines; it could be the way that the name of a pop song is spelled or just little things, but they're kind of aggregating them and its actually quite interesting.

We're clearly able to look at what's happened ecologically and geopolitically. We're in some type of crisis and, from the perspective of alchemists or indigenous shamans, that crisis is not just out in the world it's also within us; it's somehow a crisis of consciousness. I did some work with the Kogi in Colombia. They walked twenty-five hours down from the mountains to spend time with us, and they were really beautiful to be around. The ones who were the knowledge holders, we really tried hard to figure out what it was that they felt was so important to convey to us, and finally I repeated back to the leader, "So what you're saying is that somehow our level of consciousness, or our level of spiritual development, that what we experience as the physical, the natural, and the material world is somehow a direct reflection of consciousness and our spiritual development?" and he said, "Yes! That's why we walked twenty-five hours down from the mountain to explain that to you!"

I think that this realization is not just about the external, it's very much about the internal. Our own inner evolution is really important. Clearly, when we look around, it feels like our world is currently threatened, once again, by submersion under the dark waters of the unconscious. This authoritarianism and fascism coming back—along with what's happening ecologically, which is this dominator, consumer, materialist culture reaching its apex, where it's just not sustainable on the planet anymore—that requires a set of responses. I think one of the areas of response, and one that this event is very much about, is how we could bring rational thought and intuition together in a new creative synthesis. For me that involves what we are already seeing around the world, which is the reintroduction of initiatory practices, like psychedelic shamanism.

I think ultimately it requires going back to Steiner's idea of somehow developing a spiritual science that doesn't contradict materialist science or rational thought but actually is a way of extending our faculties of intuition, imagination, inspiration, and so on, and giving them a deeper grounding.

This is just, in a way, my own way of thinking about what's happening. What would that mean for the type of experimental research that we're discussing here? Well I think we need to step back a little bit and look at some examples, and so on, and models. I do think it was interesting in Rick Strassman's *DMT: The Spirit Molecule,* at the end of the book he became concerned that these experiments in these laboratory environments were somehow releasing negative spirits. You know, his wife got sick, and psychics warned him that they could see these kinds of spirits around him, and that was one reason why he pulled back from those experiments. I think it's something to keep in mind that we are dealing with things that we don't totally know about yet, how they operate or what their intentions are and so on.

I very much loved Jeremy Narby's essay at the end of *Shamans through Time.* Narby actually brought a group of biologists down to the Amazon to ask the ayahuasca spirit for help and insight into their work. The answers that they received were quite fascinating. Some of them were shown genetic information and ways to work with plants and so on.

Pyotr Ouspensky wrote this book about his work with Gurdjieff called *In Search of the Miraculous* and recounts this psychic and paranormal episode that they had, and he really noted that when you have these kinds of effects they're not standardized or repeatable in the way scientific experiments are. That they happen in very unique, hypercharged circumstances, kind of like your La Chorrera experience, Dennis. They require certain emotional states and Gurdjieff actually recognized this, so, for instance, when the Russian revolution was starting he actually kept his students in Russia because the fact that it was becoming more and more anxious and dangerous he felt actually accelerated their spiritual progress.

I also recommend Tom Roberts's work in his book *The Psychedelic Future of the Mind,* where he proposes that we could maybe enhance our mental abilities and even develop superhuman capacities. So instead of a singularity that was purely technological, we shift it into this idea of a neurosingularity, where we would look at all of the different things we're learning about brain states, and influencing brain waves and so on, and what we're learning about psychedelics, and really bring those into a kind of practice together. So for instance, in that book he talks about how there are these cases where people get struck by lightning and immediately

develop these tremendous capacities—paranormal psychic capacities, or abilities to speak other languages, or whatever—and if that's true and valid, then it means that it's ultimately an electromagnetic effect that's causing that. So, wouldn't there be a way to simulate that artificially through some device?

So, then I was thinking about protocols. How do we safely go about it to bring science and spirit together in a new investigation? I think the first thing to admit is that we just don't know! We need to begin the investigation with true humility. I think we would need to cover our bases; rather than just trespassing and trying to pull from these other realities, we would almost request help, we would approach it in a spirit of humility, and we would also watch for signs and accept the signs that we receive. We would also make sure that our intentions are good and that our intentions are clear. I think it would be based on a purely participatory methodology, much like what Gurdjieff was talking about and Steiner also, a systemic investigation of phenomena by way of participation. We would also integrate various factors like astrological or astronomical conjunctions, nutrition, sound, environment. These would all be deeply integrated into how we would think about our experiments, and I would say that, on a broader or more abstract level, would be integrating the feminine intuitive and masculine rational sides of consciousness, even, into our experiments and explorations.

DISCUSSION OF

Initiation, Spiritual Science, and the Limits of Reason

Angela Voss: Esoteric traditions have always known how to embed the science, the scientific, the natural sciences within the bigger picture. I just wanted to re-emphasize what you said. I think this is what we really must start doing again in our research projects. The idea that a dislocated scientific mind carries us forward and that's the only way we're going to get money is really a complete mistake for how we need to proceed. We really have to create holistic models for our research that are really going to push

the boundary to other ways of knowing. I just wanted to say thank you for saying that!

Michael Winkelman: That's why we wrote a book called *Supernatural as Natural;* the supernatural is part of human nature. My question to you, Daniel: this "11:11" phenomenon, I'm not familiar with that, could you elaborate on that?

Daniel Pinchbeck: Many people that I know, and it's a meme on the internet, find that an inordinate amount of times that they look at a clock or see a clock it's 11:11 or 1:11 or something . . .

Winkelman: So, what does that mean?

Pinchbeck: So, some people believe it's kind of a glitch in the matrix, pointing out that we are in this kind of simulated reality, or it's like the spirits are playing with our perception.

Cindy Winkelman: I find it interesting you said that because I've noted that time as well, just for no reason, but when you said that I thought, *Yeah, I've noticed that!*

Pinchbeck: I don't mean to reify the event stuff. I try to have a phenomenological and participatory investigation of reality, and I find this comes up, so I integrate that into a way of thinking.

David Luke: I think it was Robert Anton Wilson who coined the whole 23 phenomenon. He did this experiment of tuning yourself into the apophenia, whereby you're perceiving these connections in things, by choosing the number 23 as the object of his synchronicity. Then it did become reified, it took on a life of its own, in that the 23 thing just expanded beyond that. It's an interesting thought experiment. It tunes you in to a sense of perception of seeing associations in things, of then intuiting and interpreting the world as a direct communication from the divine in everything we see, as signs and omens and symbols.

Carina Cooper: Can you elaborate on the Mandela effect please?

PINCHBECK: You can just look it up, but it began with some really just kooky things, like, Did Curious George have a tail? The original thing was that a large group of people remembered that Nelson Mandela had died in prison in the 1980s and then discovered that he hadn't, and they were like, What's going on here? So people on the internet began to correlate these memories they had that were disjunctive with what they could then find through evidence. There're many of them that people are focusing on.

COOPER: Is this like time realities, or different timelines coming together?

PINCHBECK: I suppose. I mean, whether we're in a directly causal situation, Nietzsche, for instance, talked about this idea of cause and effect that was ultimately something that our human minds grasped on to but then ultimately the universe might be organized in a different way.

BERNARD CARR: You mentioned the size of the moon and the sun being the same. Now that's of course crucial because that's how we tested general relativity in 1919. We would have had to have waited a long, long time before they confirmed relativity by that method otherwise. People often say that's proof that the universe is very beneficent because it wants to be able to prove this great truth, but it's interesting that there is actually this anthropic reason we need the moon and the sun to have the same size and that's because having the same angular size means that they have the same tidal effects. There are arguments that the tidal effects of the sun and the moon have to be comparable so that life can develop in puddles and things like that. So, it's interesting that you gave a kind of mythological significance, but there's another interpretation that is more anthropic.

VIMAL DARPAN: Just referencing your speculations on 2012, also in reference to Terence's timewave zero, it's interesting to note that although 2012 wasn't the wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am event that people thought it would be, some very significant results have appeared in retrospect. I remember that night, we had a big ceremony on that date and had eight friends over. There was a point in the evening where a real silence descended in on that ceremony, and what I felt was happening was that there was something very definite occurring, but it was on a more subtle level, that in fact it felt almost as if we'd come into critical mass, and what had previously been for the past twenty or thirty years an uphill battle

introducing these new paradigms into the old system, is now a downhill run. It appears to reflect that way in my work, in the sense that a lot of people are turning up to ceremonies that you would never have expected to turn up, say twenty years ago. A lot of people seem to be more open, more pliable. People in their seventies and eighties coming to ceremonies are suddenly feeling that impulse, feeling respect for the ancient wisdom of the plant, where perhaps they wouldn't have been able to embrace that aspect prior to that. So, it appears to be a cascading effect that seems to have come from that point, and I think you're right, it has some more ongoing effects. It was more of a catalytic point rather than an apocalyptic point.

PINCHBECK: It's interesting when you think of the Magaña idea that, somehow, it's a transition point from the sun of light to the sun of darkness. I found it very poetically fascinating.

LUKE: A point you raised was that the concept of synchronicity hadn't even really occurred until it was presented by Carl Jung, is that right? It hadn't even occurred to me, that's really interesting.

PINCHBECK: Yep, pretty much, I mean, in the West. Mark Twain wrote this journal entry where he was noting them because he was a very aware person, instead of watching his own reality, you know, as we all do. And then Jung kind of revived the concept and F. David Peat wrote a beautiful book *Synchronicity: The Bridge between Mind and Matter,* seeing it as an acausal ordering principle, and now I think many people have stepped into this new paradigm of just recognizing that that's just a profound way in which the universe orchestrates itself somehow.

LUKE: I guess it's a little bit like how Rupert Sheldrake, who was here at the prior event, suggests that the laws of physics are not necessarily laws. They don't have to be laws; they could evolve over time. Maybe synchronicity and acausal principles can emerge as well.

PINCHBECK: If we reapply them by focusing on them that can be part of this process as a transition.

LUKE: A kind of bootstrapping!

JOHN CHAVEZ: The part of your presentation where you talk about using psychedelics to tap into superhuman abilities, I think that there's a polarity in terms of microdosing and huge doses, to have tiny effects that you can't really notice to huge effects where you're not really that functional. In what capacity do you think that would work?

PINCHBECK: First of all, to recognize that we do have these superhuman capacities that humans do access at different junctures. We can see videos of masters of chi who can throw people across the room energetically. We have tremendous capacity to access this, and maybe it's one trajectory that's focused on these latent capacities in psychic abilities and to develop ourselves. Psychedelics are a tool for that. I'm not saying that's the only way to do it. I'm also very intrigued by this knowledge coming through of other Amazonian plants that can be used in the *dieta* to alter salt balance or for healing and so on.

CHAVEZ: It seems like you've had some pretty drastic paranormal experiences, so what do you think the limits are to our human potential?

PINCHBECK: I don't think we can even know that.

CHRIS BACHE: I would like to return and underscore a point about how, in opening a portal into domains, we're going into somebody's garden that we don't know the rules of, and there's a potential of unleashing forces that can be potentially problematic. We have the tendency to see that in demonic forms, and I acknowledge Rick's concern [referring to Rick Strassman], but in other systems it's just a matter of respect and understanding that these higher principles don't necessarily interface with our realities easily, and therefore caution and respect should be taken. Vajrayana Buddhism has a very sophisticated understanding of what's involved when drawing the higher into the fold, and even very high pure teachings have guardians that protect our practices, so you would never bring in nondual mahamudra teachings without first doing protective practices—so that you make sure you don't make mistakes in bringing those teachings into a world where they might be misunderstood or misconstrued. And I would encourage us to continue to be aware that when we do open these windows we should always honor the gods and ask the protection of the gods and guardians, and really understand we are the ones who know less, they know more and

they'll help us, but we have to ask for their help. I just really support that idea!

PINCHBECK: Good point!

CHAPTER 12

Summary of Divine Molecule Talks

Exploring Entheogenic Entity Encounters

David Luke

So, it's my unesteemed privilege to provide a bit of a synthesis of what we've been talking about this week, which is not going to be an easy task because I've just kind of cobbled it together this morning, but I'll give it a go. So, thank you for your attention, and I'd like to give some thank yous, primarily to Anton, thank you for your vision, vast curiosity, openness, humor, generosity, and courage in hosting this event. Rory, as ever it was great working with you, and like last time it didn't seem like work at all, because you did most of it, so thank you very much. Thanks too to Max, Tom, and Giancarlo for filming, and to the staff here at Tyringham for looking after us, for ensuring our cups are never empty, and especially to the chefs for the amazing food, providing the sustenance, for both our brains (or branes) and our bulk, that is required for our multidisciplinary and multidimensional explorations this week, and indeed thanks to everyone for everything behind the scenes. Thanks too, especially, to all the speakers, for making the long journeys here, especially the psychedelic virgins who bravely engaged with such a very strange invitation, and to the discussants. Thank you all for sharing your vast experience, knowledge,

wisdom, and insight. Our intellectual cup is surely overflowing. And thank you for holding the space and journeying with us on such an exotic, or perhaps quixotic expedition.

As last time, I'll start with the inscription from the Temple of Music outside in the garden. So, on our quest for truth, what do we know? I feel like we've been pith-helmeted explorers immersed deep in a dense jungle, taking it in turns to lead each other through and entertaining each other in the forest of hypotheses. So, I'm here to report back on the flora, fauna, and fungi in the shaman's garden that is also a university, and indeed, the universe, or cosmos, or entiologos. Let's start with our fauna, and fauns, as the spritely nymphs, elves, and dwarfs on the "other" side commonly do appear as just that. Be they small, blue, pointy dwarves popping through violently into consensus reality and assaulting people at the whore store, or cartoonish, blue, triangular figures encased within the EEG-encased heads of psychonauts in the DMT laboratory at Imperial College. There is a certain commonality, it would seem, between alien abduction scenarios, experienced *as if* in the world out there, and the impish and elven encounters experienced within by DMT experients in the lab, or elsewhere.

And it is their perceived sentience that makes them so "other," perhaps mediated by innate cerebral modules we are destined to experience through sheer hardwiring, as Michael suggests. Whatever, these beings typically appear to have purpose, intelligence, and intention, be it emotional parasitism and the seeking of sexually systemized symbiosis, as occurs with our more intrusive encounters, or perhaps the caring, healing, and rejuvenating operations of shadowy presences.

Nevertheless, whether we enter this dreamlike state with a rude awakening or are greeted with a pillow of love, there is something essentially sentient about these strangers in a strange land. Sometimes they are there with a reception committee waiting to greet us, and to welcome us back to a familiar world from long ago, and we are children again in the playpen being treated to a hyperdimensional ride at the cosmic fairground by carnivalesque clowns, and yet other times they can seem shocked to see us there, and we are treated as trespassers in a sacred and yet alien place.

And yet the persons we encounter there are often all too eager to show us around, bamboozling us with extraordinary and beautiful things, just as Anton might on giving us a tour of the Temple of Music, guiding us,

teaching us, and indeed, communicating with us. Helping us to understand time, or learn the doctoring way of teacher plants, or showing us the death and rebirth of the future human species, the *us* that is *them,* time-traveling humans appearing as aliens forcing evolution onto their primitive primate predecessors so that they can become. They *come* so that they can *be*. And in perceiving the time to come as somehow alien, and yet all too familiar, except for those who recognize the mechanic as the shamanic organic, we mistake the eschatological as technological.

As a little aside here, Alfred William Wallace, the co-creator of the theory of evolution, obtained most of his data by traveling in the Amazon, and at this symposium last time Rupert Sheldrake wondered whether he might have taken ayahuasca. I've since discovered that he actually knew and traveled there with Richard Spruce, the first Western discover of ayahuasca, and Wallace even posthumously edited and published Spruce's *Notes of a Botanist on the Amazon & Andes*. So, there is, perhaps, something to the speculation that he could well have imbibed ayahuasca on his travels. His theory of evolution somewhat differs from Darwin in that he posited a spiritual evolution alongside the now-standard concept of physical evolution.

In discussing the possible eschatological and simultaneously teleological evolution, we are reminded here of Bill's entelechy, the vital principle that guides the development and functioning of an organism, which makes our endeavor as much entelechology as entiology! I apologize. It's hard not to get too verbose in such a quest as sublime as this, and yet we are repeatedly advised that language here is a stumbling block in communicating our discoveries, and we have to be architects of some new hybrid Sankrit quantum insectoid emotional oratory music. Perhaps we can ask Luis to teach us how to sing along with his cockroach chorus he inevitably learned on his multitudinous sharing of shimmering shanties with them.

And because our future echoes are speaking to us in a byzantinegothic architectural hybridized language of hieroglyphic, cymatic, synesthetic, extradimensional geometry, we can *only* struggle to understand, and somewhat unsurprisingly perhaps, if a Ph.D. in cosmology provides no license to even understand quantum theory in current collective consensus external reality. Hopefully this is a relief for Chris Bache?

Fortunately, P. K. Dick assures us *we are* the very language we are creating. Everything is composed of logos, *including us,* in this new biolinguistic mythopoetic mysticism, and so that is ultimately suffused with paradox. And here emerges the trickster character of these encounters. These elves *are* prankish, as Chris Timmermann tells us. Indeed Luis's attempt to look in the mirror within the ayahasuca world and try and see himself as they would see him was always thwarted, but then it's hard to get a good look at yourself, or elf, if you are the puppeteer with your hand up the backside of the alien wearing the demon mask looking at you, as Jeff reminds us. It is a hall of mirrors, within a diamond with infinite facets.

Seemingly, we are merely gazing at the enigmatic presence of the human mind as it winks back at us from the dark, and we are in a reflexive loop of high weirdness. Ultimately all our description, our language, or experience, is filtered back to terra firma through the lens of our life experience. Although through our transformative lycanthropy perhaps we can become and use our daimon as the mediator between us and the divine, and this really makes ayahuasca a type of Daimon Tea, rather than DMT.

So, how to forge ahead with our discovery of this terra incognita? Well it seems to be a place, a place with space, a mindspace and timestream perhaps, with at least eleven dimensions of spacetime as we are informed may well exist according to M-theory, and perhaps we can have a new first-person Dimensional M-Theory (DMT) too. And Bernard reminds us that perception is not in the brain, it is a 4-D process, at the very least, and we can perhaps see that from the omnidirectional vision experienced in Ralph's expanded states of consciousness, and even the extradimensional percepts of DMT experiences. Perhaps we can access the hyperdimensionality of time too, the specious present that may compress a million years of human existence to a moment.

But what of methodology? Well of course we have neuroscience, neurophenomology, microphenomenology, but is this enough? As Jeff reminds us, we need to balance knowing with understanding and also look beyond mechanisms and causality toward meaning and narrative. And as Chris Bache and Daniel tell us, our current stories are not working anymore. So, how do we map the microcosm to the macrocosm, as Angela asks? And how radical is our empiricism? Perhaps not radical enough.

As well as innate modules and brain regions, we need to pursue Hermeneutics and reflexivity. We need to follow Sophia and tread in the footprints left behind by her wisdom. Perhaps we should also consider stalking St. Augustine too, and remember that reason is a mental operation and only a rare person can use it to approach God. Furthermore, there is a danger in letting the emissary overthrow the master as it is threatening to do in our current dominant Western paradigm, science.

Indeed, Steiner encourages a spiritual science and offers practices to develop our supersense organs of cognition. Albert Hofmann, the father of LSD always said, "A scientist who is not a mystic, is no scientist." So, as well as epistemological approaches, there are also some practical techniques available to us to help us set Chris's Diamond Light in its rightful place as the missing jewel in Bernard's crown of physics. Ralph entreats us to pay attention, set our intention, and maintain awareness. Set and setting is as important as substance, and this can also be used in helping to recall the extraordinary trip experience by utilizing context-dependent memory when fishing at the shores of the well of remembrance.

But also, we should recall that shamanic *dis-membering* precedes *re-membering*. We should also proffer our gift of attention to enable apperception and access our inner sense as we travel in ignorance and innocence. And this innocence gives us the unconditional trust, from Bill, that is required "to boldly go." Our intention means meeting, accepting, and diving into whatever occurs, without ego! We literally have to tell the ego to go out and play in the yard! As Jeff says, you have nothing to fear. So, let us proceed, as Bill reminds us, in and through. In and through.

So, on our journey in and through we have some different research approaches on offer, primarily within the scientific, empirical domain. So, I'm going to run through a few of these ideas, and I'd like to open them up for discussion. Some of them are more formed than others, and I'll start with a couple we've been discussing throughout the week, which are a fusion of my own and Anton's ideas, and this borrows heavily from parapsychology, but also from other research.

The first of these would be a kind of shared visionary experience, or transmitted vision, or tele-vision if you like, but a whole different kind of television. So, this would require having psychonauts together, perhaps four people at a time, perhaps smoking or injected with DMT. And there are a

few options, you can have one of them try and see a particular image or pattern, and try to transmit it to the others, though we think that may be problematic for them to try and maintain their intention within the DMT space. So alternatively, we can isolate the different participants, and interview them immediately after their experience, although first of all there should be some kind of group tune in, they should spend some concerted time together, perhaps some should be friends already, to do some deep toning or emotional bonding. So, you would have the four of them there, in the same room perhaps, but maybe partitioned off and not speaking to each other in words, but they should go into their DMT experience with a sense of sharing their collective vision. Then as they emerge from it they are immediately taken off individually, so that there is no kind of sensory or informational leakage from this world, and interviewed immediately about their experience.

We can take those transcripts of their trip reports and have blinded independent judges compare them among a number of dummy transcripts from DMT trips that were not part of this shared experience. Thereby we can establish some commonalities if independent judges are able to identify that these associated trip reports share a common theme. We can even look at that probabilistically and establish some scientific statistical validity for our experiment. Michael?

MICHAEL WINKELMAN: I don't want to appear to be critical, but that's kind of naive from a parapsychological point of view. I mean, what happens to these participants beforehand is going to shape their experiences. If there's a terrorist attack that day, they're all going to have that residue. If they all sing Hindu hymns that day, there's going to be a residue. Trying to create a situation that does not bring that sort of residue in is virtually impossible. And so in trying to approach these kinds of studies we have go back and look at the kind of methodological considerations the Society for Psychical Research was doing a hundred years ago, and it was a very challenging situation, how you bring in information to be transmitted that can be later verified without having just normal contamination much less the psi hypothesis that you already brought up. I think if this is going to go forward we have to bring in some really astute parapsychologists to help us address this issue of just *ordinary* leakage.

David Luke: You are absolutely right, Michael. I was discussing this with Chris [Timmermann] earlier, and we figured that this proposal is a more naturalistic proof of process, initially. Obviously it has some risk of contamination through prior experience, and instead you can go for a sender-receiver kind of model where you present them with the target beforehand, or one of them with the target beforehand, or even somebody remotely with the target beforehand, but we are trying to get the balance between experimental control and naturalistic phenomena, in that there is a shared group experience that often occurs in ayahuasca ceremonies, and so on and so forth. So, it would be a stepping-stone, and a proof of process, and I fully identify there are extraneous variables here that aren't being controlled for, but I think this could be an initial step. Or you go straight in for, OK, somebody is shown the target and they have to try and transmit it to the group. That could be an alternative method. You could do both, but it may be worthwhile just seeing if you can get this group thing going in less controlled ways, initially. Bernard?

Bernard Carr: It might be an idea to do an experiment using ayahuasca inside the ganzfeld, where there's no mathematical problem with detecting whether the group is receiving the correct image.

Luke: Yes, that is also possible. I guess the thing is, ideally you want to have the sender in the DMT state as well, but that may be somewhat intentionally challenging, in getting the person, the sender, to fix on the target. Perhaps we could have one person with a slightly lower dose to be shown the target and they can transmit it to the others.

Winkelman: [Smiling] We always set our intention though, right?

Ralph Metzner: My question would be, What is the intention? What are you trying to prove or find out with this study?

Luke: I think we are trying to establish if there is any kind of group shared experience, visionary experience, beyond just all lying together on the floor.

Audience Member: How would this be established?

LUKE: Probabilistically, through the method of empirical science, which is all probabilistic. You have a number of dummy transcripts, which are not the target to be matched by the judges, so there is a way in which you can independently judge them and rate them that can establish the probability of the judge identifying the four appropriate transcripts together, or even the probability of identity of the target if you prime people with the target, there is a method here already from parapsychology. You then either use an independent judge, or the subjects themselves have to identify what the target is from their own experience and there are number of dummy targets that they have to select it from.

WINKELMAN: So remote viewing studies are just the perfect paradigm?

LUKE: That would be more clairvoyance though, rather than a shared visionary experience.

WINKELMAN: But the exact same paradigm, I think, applies. You have multiple targets, you have an experience on one of the targets, and everyone comes back later and says which one of these possible targets was the actual one.

LUKE: Yes, although the target in remote viewing classically is a location. But essentially yes, you are doing a sort of group clairvoyance experiment.

DENNIS MCKENNA: I recall an experiment done in the 1960s with contact highs, and I think the outcome of that was where one person was dominant and one person was not—for example, two people separated in different rooms, one takes LSD, the other one doesn't. Both have a strong reaction. Then you reverse that, the dominant person takes LSD and the other person doesn't, and neither has a reaction to the LSD. Do you recall that research?

LUKE: I don't recall that experiment, but we've been doing some twin telepathy experiments and, classically, from their own experiences one of them tends to receive and one seems to be the sender.

MCKENNA: That would be a place to start because if you have both people ingesting substances, you are introducing additional variables into it. And if it's true that there is this dominant/recessive relationship, you might learn

something about how these images are shared by some kind of telepathic process or whatever. The same idea, I think, applies to remote viewing.

Luke: Absolutely, a useful way of identifying who you want to be your sender, perhaps.

Ede Frecska: What do you think of using a presentiment design, with one subject watching a computer screen, and recording the skin response that indicates beforehand what kind of picture will come, but then you do it with DMT?

Luke: That would be interesting to look at as well. Presentiment is a nice paradigm, and we already see this in people who aren't under the influence, although I think there's something unique in psychedelics in that they induce this visionary experience, which is better utilized in a more conscious experience. Presentiment is an unconscious experience, really, which is just bodily or psychophysical, but it's worth exploring. I also have a test paradigm similar to Daryl Bem's, and I actually did it with San Pedro cactus, using video clips as dynamic targets, but it's a precognition experiment, so the target hasn't even been selected when you try and identify it, and I got very nice significant results, which I could probably tell you about that another time. So, I have a paradigm there for testing precognition that I know works, at least in principle, but I think there is something unique to the DMT visionary experience, and the shared experience, and the telepathic experience also, that I'd like to get at.

Chris Timmermann: Thinking more about the influence of the context and how to control for people having shared visions that are not necessarily modulated by the drug, you can have controlled people within the group, knowingly not having the drug, having some sort of imagery task, and then write the report and try being as discreet as possible with the imagery and seeing if there are shared elements. This is a controlled method.

Luke: Excellent. So long as they are not hitchhiking, like Dennis's contact high research.

Metzner: So, you're going to have a look at doing an ESP card-like experiment?

LUKE: No, not card experiments. They did do a lot of the ESP card experiments with psychedelics in the 1960s, and they were not very successful.

METZNER: So, what's the measurement or assessment process?

LUKE: Say for instance, if you were priming people with the target you would use a one-minute video clip, something dynamic, and then you have a number of similar decoys that are not the target, in a classic double-blind fashion. The original Zener cards *were* used in the 1960s, but they did very prolonged repeated tasks with them, and they tried to get people to guess them for hours, and it didn't really work.

METZNER: Of course it doesn't work, because the images are meaningless and uninteresting. It has to be interesting. I just don't see the point of this experiment. I don't mean to be rude. What are you trying to prove? That telepathy exists? We already know that it occurs. For what purpose? For what purpose? Really.

LUKE: I guess . . .

METZNER: For healing, that would be a purpose.

ANTON BILTON: I'll answer that. There are three problems. My drive for this is that there is certainly something going on. Whether it's internal or external, people are having dramatic effects. So, we should be examining this. We are spending a lot of money sending satellites out to look for star constellations and to look for signs of life on other planets. There is something dramatic going on here, it's affecting people, it's healing people. And as I said to start with, it's not something that we need to look at afresh. It's something that people did for thousands of years and it's been hijacked; it's been ridiculed and demonized. From a method of inquiry position, I think that it's something interesting for people to learn, the human condition, to gain knowledge. So, I think there's that aspect, that's important.

And as I touched upon this morning, if you are going to encounter a sentient presence, then what is that? And if it's there and you can commune with it, then we do need guidance and help. Again, asking the gods for help

is an ancient thing, asking them now, and then trying to influence the current thinking. I was explaining to some people the other day, each morning I put CNN on, and there is a zeitgeist of anxiety in America now, and you talk about that resonance, as John Chavez said, between one person and another one, look at the collective resonance of anxiety, it leads to mania, it leads to purges and genocides. What makes the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker become a maniac, when we guillotine people and gas people? The collective zeitgeist of thought. We need to shift the collective zeitgeist, and if you can come up with some interesting and really mind-blowing experiments that are not just in the sidelines, but they get into the realm of the published media, then that can have an effect.

And what's the purpose of that? I think the purpose of that was beautifully touched on in Chris Bache's talk, we recognize physical evolution, and then you, David, talked about spiritual evolution, if we are going to become the superhuman that Chris talked about, this is the arena that it is going to develop in I think. You know, I'm not going to grow a sixth finger, but I might evolve in my consciousness such that I can commune with my authentic self, divinity, alternate gods, at all times, and maybe that will lead to eureka moments, to create a cure for cancer or some disease, maybe some aha! moments will become very prevalent. But to get there we all need to be pushing, as everyone here is by attending this conference, I think. So those are my intentions.

METZNER: I like what Jeremy Narby did. He did this thing, in order to see if people taking ayahuasca could gain scientific insights into actual scientifically demonstrated phenomena, so he gathered scientists, biochemists, and physiologists who knew the specialized language and who could then interpret what they were seeing, in terms of their specialized language. Whereas you or I seeing the same thing would say, "Oh, we saw blobs" and that sort of thing, steams of color and stuff like that.

BILTON: Well in our other proposals, we haven't got to that yet. That's in there, and my guess is that we are going to get some results on some of this stuff. But as I rightly touch on here, going to the next level, imagine that someone's doing Parkinson's research right now, and you get the best experts on Parkinson's research in the world and you invite them to come and try this, could they get the answer? Could they go, "Oh my god that's

the missing link, let's go back and try it out," like Francis Crick with DNA when he had that moment on LSD. Bingo!

METZNER: That would be fantastic, because just having ordinary people sitting around and sending telepathic messages, I don't see the point really. I mean, telepathy occurs. We know that it occurs, all the time, with or without drugs. For what purpose? Mind-to-mind transfer is going on all the time. Even as we speak, we are both picking up on each other's thoughts; we are in each other's mind field.

LUKE: I'm glad you believe that, Ralph, because there is a lot of skepticism out there in the scientific community . . .

METZNER: But how do you use that for human betterment, you know, better healing, better communication, for healing particularly? And I think the best way to do the research on this thing, you need a completely different model. Forget the placebo-controlled model; it's ridiculous, it's been ridiculous since the 1960s, and it's not gotten any better, and it's a medical model and this is not medicine, it's not a cure, we are not trying to cure anything, this is an expansion of consciousness. There's no criterion. Your expanded consciousness has no criterion, because by definition it means knowing something that you didn't know before. So, you can't predict and test your hypotheses. It's exploration. It's like Wundt, or Alexander von Humboldt when he went to South America, he wasn't doing any double-blind placebo-controlled studies, it was descriptive and narrative anthropology. "These are the plants, these are the flowers, these are the trees, these are the birds, these are the people, this is what they do, the social, cultural, biological, natural communities," and we need an anthropology of the spirit world, for different people, for different attitudes, and I think the sessions need to be group sessions. Communication by group. The time of individual explorers has long passed. And the sharing of groups support one another, and you can have fantastic controlled protocols.

Think of the fact now that marijuana is now legal in the States, for example, you could do experiments with marijuana and you don't need to get anybody's permission. You could do an experiment, a group of people could sit together and figure out how to use marijuana in a healing way, in a group therapy context, and they could each have their own prescription and

get it and take it before the session and you have an experiment. Marijuana hasn't been legal in over a hundred years, we know nothing about it, and the potential is huge, unexplored, and undemonstrated, and that would be like amplified group therapy or group problem solving. I think groups are the way to go. Forget about the placebo control, that's a medical model, a drug company model, a pharmaceutical pharmacratic model. It's not going to lead to anything. It's designed to sell drugs, that's it. And that's not what we are doing; we are not trying to sell anything [laughs].

LUKE: Thanks for that, Ralph. I'll pick up on some of your points. What we have proposed so far is only one of the plans, and there are a number of others on the table, and one of those *is* one of discovery, in that we have high-level scientists, and I think we could particularly look to astronomy, to areas in which there is something that *can* be discovered through a visual visionary experience, and could somehow be verified, perhaps a new constellation, if we get astronomers together, or high-level mathematicians, or whatever it is, and they come up with either a mathematical or astronomical . . .

BILTON: It's like the whole Dogon mystery myth, that they understood the Sirius constellation, and we only discovered it relatively recently, that provoked this idea that we know the trajectory of a satellite, we know that it'll be picking up constellations that we haven't seen yet, so we're not looking for premonitions of what may happen tomorrow, we're just looking for something that exists today that we don't know about. We ask the beings, we know the trajectory, it's a very easy thing, something memorable, so that when people land from long-term DMT trips, they are able to easily be communicated and then correlate what they say and submit it, and then a week later somebody says, "My god how did you know that, because we've just seen it!"

CARR: To give this some context: I have always been interested in the old Buddhist literature, the *Udānavarga,* where the Buddha claimed to have all sorts of insights into the nature of the physical universe, the structure of galaxies, the history of the big bang, the cycles, and things like this, and I've looked at some of these texts, and in some ways they are remarkably accurate and prescient. I mean, you get things like the age of the universe as being something like twenty billion years, which is pretty accurate even

though it was in 500 BCE. So you have the irony that you have people spending billions of pounds on telescopes to measure the age of the universe, with the space station, or then you have the Buddha, or these psychonauts, using the *inner* space station to get the same information. So that's an interesting way to get it.

JUDITH WAY: I'm aware that the ideas we have all raised here are an incredibly multifaceted brew, and they haven't all been integrated yet, so we're talking about ideas and we're integrating new ideas simultaneously. What I want to bring to the question of the research project is this: How do you see that you can actually integrate the element of the sacred, which we've discussed and confirmed as completely apparent, in this practice of taking plants in a sacramental manner with the mode of experimentation that is seeking to derive results in order to disseminate information? And I just want to bring the voice of the plant kingdom into this because I feel like we need to reckon where we are in relationship with these kingdoms on the planet. I think that's what people encounter when they journey with plants, and one of the things we've heard about is the scientific urge and the split from the imaginal, and how we are actually ourselves back in communication with the imaginal, but I think this needs to take place in the actual cognitive thrust of our endeavors, and this may even paralyze some of our current endeavors if we're really to integrate some of this essence, so I am wondering how you are going to integrate.

LUKE: I don't see a problem with it. We can approach these things both shamanically and scientifically. Shamans use these plants to access information, to communicate with the spirits of nature, or to get information from the future, or from distant locations. It's very little difference except that it's not done within an experimental context; it's done within a pragmatic context. But they do that, they take these things for transcending space and time, and accessing information, it's not much different.

WAY: But they have a culture and tradition and a protective ceremony that engages with the sacred.

LUKE: But there's no reason why you can't do a protective ritual within the context of an experiment as well.

BILTON: That's why I spoke about marrying science and spirituality and bringing the utmost reverence to it. There's nothing dirty about inquiry, and having sat in many sacred ceremonies myself, I see the purpose of intentions is absolutely vital, and the purpose of clean space, reverence to what you are about to witness, or who you are about to meet. That doesn't mean we can't marry that to the scientific paradigm. And I think that's what the ancients did, a group of people like all of us, the believers and the not-so believers, all met and then did, with great respect, the experiments they needed to do to see whether it was happening or not happening. So, I'm totally with you on what you're saying, but I think the line of inquiry that we are following would be respectful and reverential. And as I mention in my preface, nothing is going to happen without complicity.

WAY: So you'll seek complicity from the plants before you begin.

LUKE: The plants *and* the molecules even.

BILTON: My fear is that nothing will happen because they are not complicit, but I don't think that should stop us in our potential line of inquiry because there's too much at stake and we should try and do something.

LUKE: There's also the trickster element too. In our LSD trial using top-level scientists to creatively explore their own research problems, I ran a precognition experiment with them, and I got significant results, but it was in the opposite direction. They were ranking the actual target as definitely not the target and we got significant findings, but in the opposite way, probably because they were, in the vast majority, very skeptical of psychic phenomena. So, there is this kind of trickster element always at work anyway, which probably always usurps your endeavors.

LUIS LUNA: Something I think would be very interesting to explore is the afterglow. Not only the peak, but the afterglow. It has something more going on, the imaginal has more power, and I think that there are a lot of things that can be done, one and a half hours, two hours after the peak.

JOHN CHAVEZ: My concern is that everyone has different anatomical structures, and everyone has a different baseline state of consciousness. What was said about twins: I think that would be a dynamic aspect to this

experiment if you utilize six sets of twins, or triplets, or quadruplets, because they may have more overlap in terms of anatomical structure and maybe their baseline consciousness. I think there's such a variation going in that even if you give people the same dose of DMT it is very difficult to get complete or precise overlap and you might get more close overlap with twins.

LUKE: You're absolutely right. I have been running some twin telepathy experiments, and they've been quite successful so far. It's been very interesting. You put one twin in one room, one in the other, then you monitor the arousal of one twin through skin conductance, and then you randomly shock one of them—not literally electrically shock, but you drop a pile of plates behind them or pop a balloon—and you can seemingly detect the effect in the other twin. It's nice, it works well, and we could use twins to maximize the effects, though not with that particular task on DMT, but we hope to explore the power of this substance and its visionary qualities.

But there is another possible paradigm as well, and there are a few ideas on the table, and we don't have time for all of them, but one of them would be—and this kind of ties in with what Bernard brought up—that one of the things we've observed with DMT experiences is that people have extradimensional percepts. They are having these experiences where they are perceiving geometric patterns but that have far more than the usual three spatial dimensions, as they perceive it, often many more, and this is an extraordinary phenomenon. It somehow has some resonance with what's being talked about in physics with M-theory, with all these compactified dimensions that Bernard mentioned.

So, is there a way in which we can explore that as a possible phenomenon? This is something quite unique and could have extraordinary ramifications for physics. Can we find a way to explore it? Unfortunately, we don't actually have any 4-D objects in this 3-D world, but there are now 4-D computer games coming out, but they are still three-dimensional, in fact they are two-dimensional, but they show a three-dimensional world that you can move between into different dimensions. And could it be that the DMT experience makes people better at these games? Or can we show them tesseracts, hypercubes, which are 3-D interpretations of a 4-D object, and you could see if there is an enhanced ability to perceive the

extradimensionality of these supposedly 4-D objects having had an extradimensional DMT experience?

And then, in all these experiments, an alternative route is then to try and see whether the presence of entities or not, perhaps through our entreaties for assistance in our research endeavor, has an effect, or is correlated with success in the outcome of these experiments. So, I'll just throw those ideas out there. Ralph?

METZNER: This is a metaparadigm question. What paradigm are we working with? Are we trying to heal something, or trying to find out something? It's different. The search for healing is based on recognizing an illness or disturbance and coming to a place of healing; the search for knowledge is trying to find out something, and these substances have always been used for healing, and for trying to find out something. I think we are missing the boat in many ways if we only concentrate on finding what are the brain functions underlying these strange perceptions. LSD, and other drugs, were tested already in the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction, which is a huge problem to this day, and it was already demonstrated to be reasonably effective; the treatment of PTSD with MDMA is immensely promising and there is no other treatment that has demonstrated, informally not scientifically, that it helps people deal with war trauma. Veterans are committing suicide at the rate of seven or more a day! It's an enormous social problem and we'd be well advised to find ways to generate a social system. Get away from the placebo-controlled model—that's not the point. You're not trying to prove something; you are trying to heal something.

LUKE: Well, if that's your purpose. But there's *already* a lot of research going on with that endeavor. Nobody's looking at the pure research of the visionary experience particularly. We have MAPS and we have the Beckley Foundation and all the others, and *there is* clinical research going on into the use of the substances for all kinds of things—PTSD, anxiety, depression—that's already an ongoing research endeavor, which I absolutely fully salute, and it has massive practical and pragmatic value, at least in helping to change legislation, perhaps. But what we are trying to do is answer a more specific question that ultimately can inform our understanding of the ways in which these things heal.

METZNER: Well think of it as a social psychology question rather than an experimental psychology question. Because we are social beings, we are looking at a social problem, you know, veterans committing suicide, alcoholism and addiction. The consciousness-expanding drugs are a natural treatment for addiction, which is a consciousness constriction. We don't want to get stuck with our own metaparadigms.

LUKE: No, sure. But this clinical research is already happening, so it's like that *and* this. Why restrict ourselves to only looking at the clinical applications, why not use this as an opportunity for exploration? Current Western medicine, good or bad, and it's some good and some bad, has only been supported through discovery, through technology, as you said, the discovery of how to treat things. But if we can understand, if we can establish some ways of verifying or exploring the visionary experience itself, I think that also deserves a voice, to be brought into the discussion.

METZNER: Of course. I'm not stopping you.

LUKE: Oh good. Michael?

WINKELMAN: I want to tackle Ralph's comments here. I mean, all of us have been changed in a way that we think is good by using these substances. I think in the long run we are not so much interested in, you know, finding another constellation before NASA does; we want to be able to have these substances make a difference in the world. And as outrageous as it might seem, rather than trying to prove the existence of some being, I think we'd be better off trying to get Donald Trump, and Theresa May, and Benjamin Netanyahu to take these things. I mean *that* could make a difference in the world, whether or not there is some indication of an entity. So, curing is probably a better application than trying to find another nebula.

LUKE: Well, there's applications and there's pure research; there doesn't just have to be the one.

BILTON: I'd just like to say, that that's only going to happen if the world wakes up. Donald Trump is only going to drink ayahuasca if he becomes aware of the benefits of this on a much larger scale. We are a very small

group in this room, and however much ayahuasca has grown exponentially, it's still small in the world. The notion of the experiments, the revelation of discovering something with media impact, can change the way everyone looks at something, and then you might get a world leader going, "You know what, I'm going to go and try it."

McKenna: That kind of assumes that he's open to learning stuff.

[audience laughter]

He's not interested in learning anything!

Angela Voss: I just wonder if the world is meant to be woken up by sticking to the rigid scientific method. I'm very interested in the symbolism of the fact that this house is situated between two wonderful temples—one is mind and body and the other one is spirit—and I was noticing yesterday we've got an almost Kabbalistic tree there, and we are right at the center. I don't know *how* it can be done in terms of research funding and paradigms, but in relation to what Daniel was talking about with spiritual science, and what Chris [Bache] was talking about, I cannot for the life of me see how sticking to the rules of the emissary can push us any further. Somehow we are going to have to dare to trust the fact that we are in service to something bigger, and how are we going to incorporate that? And I don't think the scientific paradigm will wake people up the way that the power of myth and metaphor will.

Luke: But it doesn't have to be either/or. It's both/and.

Voss: But how can that happen?

Luke: Well, currently science is the dominant Western paradigm, it is the current religion, people are worshipping at the church of science, so we also have to play the game. I don't think it has to be either/or. We *also* need a new metaphor, a new story, a new narrative, but we can reenchant the academy by bringing in magic through the back door, through science *as well*. There are many ways. I'm not saying that is the only way, I think there are other ways as well, but we are steeped in the paradigm of science, so we

shouldn't just say let's not talk science because that's not the answer. I think we should also engage with it, because the cork has already come of out of the genie's bottle now that scientific research has begun re-exploring psychedelics, and this is a unique opportunity to really peer inside the bottle.

VOSS: I doubt that science will ultimately have the language, but that's my own perspective.

LUKE: Well, I think it's going to drive new language.

BILL RICHARDS: Both/and. Yes, yes. I think of how we move forward. You know, if you are spelunking in a cave, you move where it's possible to move. I see the frontier right now—in front of my nose anyway—is doing the studies we need to do to get psilocybin approved for hospice and palliative care, and probably within that context to give psilocybin sessions legally to family members of people who are dying. That's a very reasonable thing, and I think it might happen in five years. The people deciding about the legality in the United States and Europe are collaborating and talking about what data we need to come up with for getting psilocybin off Schedule I, at least the first in making a legal prescription drug for people who have training to use it. Now is the content inside psilocybin offering true insights into the ultimate nature of reality, as we believe it to be, or is it just one glorious delusion? Who knows, but we know that, practically, it helps people live more fully, it wipes out depression and anxiety, it opens up interpersonal relationships, it helps people live fully until they die.

To me that says let's go there, let's put energy here, let's publicize that, let's give research funds to ensure that happens, as is happening right now in many different European countries and sites in the United States. It's a frontier we are really on, and that doesn't mean we can't do really theoretical studies as well, like, What's the relation of the experience to the brain? And how do we explain that in physics? That's great, but I think we need to move where we can move and move fast. I want to see this stuff before I die.

MCKENNA: That will get the funds faster than using it as a telescope or microscope for understanding reality. It doesn't mean that it doesn't have

value in that way. Let's get it approved, and then we can play with it any way we want. That's very practical . . .

RICHARDS: Get it in the hands of the people and use it wisely. But not everyone can look in the telescope and find the Milky Way.

LUKE: But that's already happening though, isn't it? Pretty much all of the funding for psychedelic research *is* going into clinical work, looking at treatments, or a bit of neuroscience. There's not much else going on. There are a few studies in the humanities that aren't really funded anyway. This kind of thing I'm discussing is really an exploration that actually doesn't even take much funding, you know, it's low cost. But we can explore some ideas.

WAY: I completely agree with the emphasis that this work has to go to those areas of immediate suffering; I think one thing that is so brilliant, by gathering all of your excellent minds together, is that it can create collective momentum force. The importance of the narrative of creating new breakthroughs for the benefit of the planet and changing and uplifting. I'm just drawn back to Chris Bache's talk yesterday, where he went through a very deep and personal journey, and he couldn't have gone beyond a certain point if he hadn't gone through the ocean of suffering. And I'm going to use mythic language, I'm using his narrative as mythic language, to enter into what I'm finding is conflict in myself in the debate. Without the true and genuine desire to do it for the ultimate benefit for everyone else, which is the nature of Bodhicitta, he couldn't access that and go any further. I think we can't assume that we are spiritual beings because we've had spiritual experiences. We cannot make that assumption, because we are participating in this whole thing together and it is a crisis, and this call to bring this investigation and your excellent bodies and minds together into palliative care is a really, really valuable one.

LUKE: I do hope to help bring about psychedelic palliative care before I die, I want to see psychedelic hospices before I die, it's one of my life missions, and I think we can achieve that, if I can live a little while longer, and hopefully, it won't take too long. And I've put considerable energy into trying to raise the profile of psychedelic research generally, but it's not my sole aim.

CARR: I just want to say that this discussion very much emphasizes the problem of being on the bridge between science and spirituality, and having mutual respect for both sides. I worry here that the balance seems to be almost against science and that we should focus more on the sociological, on the welfare issues, and things like that. It needs *both* sides, but they have to go together in unison! Now obviously we all have our own individual preferences. I'm a scientist; I'm passionate about science. Angela's passionate about something else. It's great, but we need the two passions working together, which is also what Angela is saying. And you just never know with science where it's going to lead. The guy who discovered the electron, he never knew when he discovered the electron that in another hundred years it was going to be a multibillion-dollar industry on which our whole civilization depended. And discoveries in science have always been like that: you never know what they are going to lead to. And these ideas and models of higher dimensions, maybe it turns out that they are all rubbish, but if it turns out that they are correct, it will have enormous benefits for mankind, both in health and spiritual considerations. So, I just want to say, please don't undervalue the value of science. I thought David's proposal, which we've sort of forgotten about, was really exciting because it's a specific way of trying to get scientific insights from these spiritual experiences. Keep the balance.

LUKE: Thank you, Bernard. Chris?

TIMMERMANN: I agree with Bernard, and I think there's something to be said about what's going in terms of how these tools are also shaping what we think is the medical model. For example, by introducing psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy, we are introducing positivity into changing how psychiatry works, by combining psychotherapy and the drug. It's therapy with substance, basically. And I think that's a major thing that's going on, from the insight through the use of scientific methods, or people call it the game if you will. That's fine, but I think there's something to be said about that as well. It's important not to forget it. That and the fact that through actual mechanistic science we can find out what are also some of the benefits that we see, and to put a scientific narrative to it, that it's associated with actual evidence that's also important, that's part of the picture. LSD got synthesized by Albert Hofmann, who was also a scientist. We do not

necessarily have to create this divide between these different disciplines; they are complementary, and there are different ways of knowing the world that can be valuable.

Luke: That's the reason we are trying to have this interdisciplinary meeting and bring these different strands of thinking and evidence together. Every one of you, and all your different insights and disciplines, are completely valuable and valid to hear in this discussion.

Luna: Just to remind us of the origin of the word *laboratory: labatorium,* what does it mean? *Laborare,* "to work," and *orare,* "to pray." It's science and spirituality. So, we have to resurrect that idea of the laboratorium.

Frecska: Just one short comment about healing and knowledge: In shamanic practice they are completely interwoven, healing and divination, all coming from spirit. And all involving restructuring information, so sometimes healing and sometimes knowledge, from divination.

Luke: Like psychic diagnosis, for example. You are transcending time and space to see inside your patient and stare into their organs or cells or DNA; that's a healing divination.

So, thank you all for that extremely fluid and effusive and exciting and diverse set of input, and hopefully we move forward with some new ideas, and at the very least, a really amazing book. So thank you all for your participation. Anton would like to say a few words.

Bilton: I really enjoyed that last session. Actually I've really enjoyed the last three and a half days, but I especially enjoyed that last bit, because when we sat down—Rory, David, and I to decide who to invite—we wanted a mix, we wanted people who came from the scientific realm, from the spiritual realm, the experiential realm, the cosmological realm, the whole gamut of that in the room, so it was very nice to have the varying views coming in. I really want to say thank you to my dear friend Rory, who's worked so hard, for the logistics, the invitations, everything, thank you so much. David, for all your compering and doing the whole thing, thank you. You did a great speech to collect everything together as well. To Max and to Thomas for your filming, and to all the people in the kitchen, but a really, really big thanks to everyone here for coming. It's been so

interesting, and I've really enjoyed meeting you all, and it couldn't have been better. So, thank you!

Participants at the Exploring Entheogenic Entity Encounters Symposium.

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Speaker Biographies

Christopher M. Bache is professor emeritus in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Youngstown State University where he taught for thirty-three years. He is also adjunct faculty at the California Institute of Integral Studies, Emeritus Fellow at the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and on the Advisory Council of Grof Legacy Training. An award-winning teacher and international speaker, Chris's work explores the philosophical implications of non-ordinary states of consciousness, especially psychedelic states. He has written four books translated into eight languages: *Lifecycles,* a study of reincarnation in light of contemporary consciousness research; *Dark Night, Early Dawn,* a pioneering work in psychedelic philosophy and collective consciousness; *The Living Classroom,* an exploration of teaching and collective fields of consciousness; and *LSD and the Mind of the Universe,* the story of his twenty-year journey with LSD.

Bernard Carr is professor of mathematics and astronomy at Queen Mary University of London. His professional area of research is cosmology and astrophysics, and he did his Ph.D. with Stephen Hawking at Cambridge. He has worked on such topics as the early universe, black holes, dark matter, and the anthropic principle. His recent books include *Universe or Multiverse?* and *Quantum Black Holes.* He also has a longstanding interest in the relationship between physics and consciousness and in psychical research since this suggests that there can be a direct interaction between mind and the physical world. He argues that the altered states of consciousness associated with psychic phenomena and anomalous experiences of time may require a higher-dimensional model of reality, which he relates to ideas in modern physics. He has been president of the Society for Psychical Research and chairman of the Scientific and Medical Network.

Jeffrey J. Kripal is the associate dean of the Faculty and Graduate Programs in the School of the Humanities and the J. Newton Rayzor chair in philosophy and religious thought at Rice University. He is also the associate director of the Center for Theory and Research and the chair of the Board at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California. Jeff is the author of eight books, including, most recently, *The Flip: Who You Really Are and Why It Matters* (2020), where he envisions the future centrality and urgency of the humanities in conversation with the history of science, the philosophy of mind, and our shared ethical, political, and ecological challenges. He is presently working on a threevolume study of paranormal currents in the sciences, modern esoteric literature, and the hidden history of science fiction for the University of Chicago Press collectively entitled *The Super Story: Science* (*Fiction*) *and Some Emergent Mythologies*. There he intuits and writes out a new emerging spectrum of superhumanities (in both senses of that expression). The website jeffreyjkripal.com describes his full body of work.

Luis Eduardo Luna received a Ph.D. from the Department of Comparative Religion at Stockholm University (1989) and was named doctor of humane letters by St. Lawrence University in 2002. He was an assistant professor in anthropology (1994–1998) at the Department of Anthropology of Santa Catarina Federal University (UFSC) in Florianópolis, Brazil, and retired from the Department of Modern Languages and Communication at the Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki in 2011. He is a Guggenheim fellow, and a fellow of The Linnean Society. Luna is author of *Vegetalismo: Shamanism among the Mestizo Population of the Peruvian Amazon* (1986), also published in Czech, is co-author with Pablo Amaringo of *Ayahuasca Visions: The Religious Iconography of a Peruvian Shaman* (1991), and co-author with Slawek Wojtowicz, Rick Strassman, and Ede Frecska of *Inner Paths to Outer Space: Journeys through Psychedelics and Other Spiritual Technologies* (2008). He is co-editor with Steven F. White of *Ayahuasca Reader: Encounters with the Amazon's Sacred Vine* (2000), with an expanded second edition published in 2016. Luna has curated art exhibitions in Europe, Latin America, and the United States, and directed two documentary 16 mm films, *Don Emilio and His Little Doctors* (1981), and *And so, I tell them to Paint* (1991). He is director of Wasiwaska, Research Center for the Study of Psychointegrator Plants, Visionary Art,

and Consciousness in Florianópolis, Brazil. (See Wasiwaska.org for more information.)

Ralph Metzner, Ph.D., (1936–2019) was a recognized pioneer in psychological, philosophical, and cross-cultural studies of consciousness and its transformations. He attended The Queen's College, Oxford, and obtained his B.A. in philosophy and psychology. Subsequently he obtained his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Harvard University, and received a postdoctoral NIMH fellowship in pharmacology at the Harvard Medical School. While at Harvard he collaborated with Timothy Leary and Richard Alpert in classic studies of psychedelics in the 1960s, co-authored *The Psychedelic Experience* and was editor of the *Psychedelic Review.* His conversational memoir of the Harvard projects in the early 1960s, with Ram Dass and Gary Bravo, *Birth of a Psychedelic Culture,* was published in 2010.

He was a psychotherapist in private practice in the San Francisco Bay Area and professor emeritus at the California Institute of Integral Studies, in San Francisco, where he taught consciousness studies and personality transformations for thirty years. Author of over one hundred scientific papers and scholarly essays, he was the editor of and contributor to two collections of essays on the pharmacology, anthropology, and phenomenology of ayahuasca (*The Ayahuasca Experience,* 2006) and of psilocybin mushrooms (*Sacred Mushroom of Visions,* 2004). He also compiled and edited a collection of essays and experiences with the empathogen MDMA, entitled *Through the Gateway of the Heart* (1985, 2012).

His books on the psychology and philosophy of transformation include *Maps of Consciousness* (1971), *The Unfolding Self* (1998), *The Well of Remembrance* (1994), and *Green Psychology* (1999). He was also the president and co-founder of the Green Earth Foundation, dedicated to healing and harmonizing the relations between humanity and the Earth (www.greenearthfound.org). His most recent work includes *Ecology of Consciousness: The Alchemy of Personal, Collective, and Planetary Transformation* (Reveal Press, 2017), and his last book was *Searching for the Philosopher's Stone* (Park Street Press, 2019). Ralph passed away in March 2019, at age eighty-three.

Daniel Pinchbeck is the bestselling author of *Breaking Open the Head, 2012: The Return of Quetzalcoatl,* and *When Plants Dream* (with Sophia Rokhlin). In his 2017 book, *How Soon Is Now,* he explored the systemic changes needed to avert ecological collapse and extinction. His work was featured in the 2010 documentary, *2012: Time for Change,* which promoted the value of indigenous knowledge systems He co-founded evolver.net and the web magazine Reality Sandwich. He has written for the *New York Times Magazine, Rolling Stone, Esquire, Wired,* and many other publications. The website Pinchbeck.io contains an archive of his past work. As director of the Center for Planetary Culture, a think tank, he built the Regenerative Societies Wiki, a database of solutions for the technical and social political challenges humanity faces. He hosted the talk show *Mind Shift,* for Gaia TV. He has spoken at festivals and conferences around the world. With Jeremy Johnson, he launched the web magazine and media company, Liminal.news. He hosts the course, Building Our Regenerative Future, as well as the Regenerative Future community network. His recent book, *The Occult Control System: UFOs, Aliens, Other Dimensions and Future Timelines,* looks at the UFO and ET phenomenon from multiple perspectives, including considering visionary and occult cosmologies from pioneers such as Rudolf Steiner and Jacques Vallee.

William A. Richards (Bill), a psychologist in the Center for Psychedelic and Consciousness Research at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, has been implementing research studies with psilocybin since 1999. His graduate degrees include M.Div. (Yale), S.T.M. (Andover-Newton), and Ph.D. (Catholic University). He also studied with Abraham Maslow at Brandeis University and with Hanscarl Leuner at Georg-August University in Göttingen, Germany, where his involvement with psilocybin research originated in 1963. From 1967 to 1977, he implemented projects of psychotherapy research with LSD, DPT, MDA, and psilocybin at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, including protocols designed to investigate the promise of psychedelics in the treatment of alcoholism, depression, narcotic addiction, and the psychological distress associated with terminal cancer, and also their use in the training of religious and mental-health professionals. His book, *Sacred Knowledge: Psychedelics and Religious Experiences* has been released by Columbia University Press.

Whitley Strieber is the author of over forty works of fiction and nonfiction. His bestsellers in fiction have included *The Wolfen, The Hunger, Warday, Majestic,* and others. *Communion,* the story of an enigmatic close encounter he had in 1985, is the largest-selling book of its kind in history. Most recently, he has published *Afterlife Revolution,* an entirely new vision of relationship between the living and "what we call the dead," and *A New World,* a record of contact experiences he has had since 2015, which have led to breakthroughs in his understanding of the otherness popularly thought of as aliens. Also, with Jeffrey Kripal, he is author of *Super Natural: A New Vision of the Unexplained* (2016).

Christopher Timmermann hails from Santiago, Chile, where he obtained a B.Sc. in psychology and subsequently obtained his neuroscience M.Sc. in Bologna, Italy. He recently completed his Ph.D. at Imperial College London under Prof. David Nutt and Dr. Robin Carhart-Harris, leading a project focusing on the effects of DMT in the human brain and on experience, while also exploring their application for mental health conditions.

Angela Voss is a musician, astrologer, and academic who since 2006 has directed two master's degree courses in Canterbury, UK, at the Universities of Kent and Christ Church—the Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination; and Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred. She has written extensively about Renaissance astrology and music, Neoplatonism, esoteric philosophy, and transformative learning, and regards herself as a "walker between the worlds" of imagination, ritual, symbolic practice, and scholarship. Her book on Ficino and astrology, *Marsilio Ficino,* was published by North Atlantic Books in 2006. She has produced two CDs, *Secrets of the Heavens* and *Images of Melancholy* on the music of Ficino and John Dowland, and co-edited four books, the most recent being *Re-enchanting the Academy* with Simon Wilson (Rubedo Press, 2017). Most of her work is available online at Canterbury.academia.edu/AngelaVoss and she can be contacted at Imaginalcosmos@gmail.com.

Michael Winkelman holds a Ph.D. from University of California–Irvine, 1985, and a M.P.H. from University of Arizona, 2002. He has engaged in cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research on shamanism, psychedelics,

and the alteration of consciousness to identify universal patterns of healing ritual and the underlying biological mechanisms. These findings are presented in *Shamans, Priests, and Witches* (1992), which provides the cross-cultural evidence regarding shamanism, and in *Shamanism: A Biopsychosocial Paradigm of Consciousness and Healing* (2nd ed., 2010). *Shamanism* provides a biogenetic model of shamanism and explains the evolutionary origins of these ancient spiritual and ritual healing capacities. This biological and evolutionary approach to human spirituality is expanded in *Supernatural as Natural* (2008, co-authored with John Baker) and *The Supernatural after the Neuro-Turn* (2019, co-edited). The role of psychedelics in human evolution and healing has been addressed in many of his publications, most recently in *Advances in Psychedelic Medicine* (2019, co-edited with Ben Sessa). He recently guest edited a special issue of the *Journal of Psychedelic Studies* on "Psychedelics in History and World Religions," documenting the widespread use of entheogens. Winkelman retired from the School of Human Evolution and Social Change (Arizona State University) in 2009 and is currently living near Pirenópolis in the central highlands of Brazil where he is developing a permaculture lifestyle while continuing his academic research. He may be reached via email at michaeljwinkelman@gmail.com or through his website, michaelwinkelman.com.

Discussant Biographies

Giancarlo Canavesio is an Italian film producer, investment banker, and entrepreneur. He is best known as founder and CEO of Mangusta Risk, Mangusta Productions, and Mangu.tv. He has produced several award-winning feature films including *The Living Wake, FIX, Being in the World, 2012 Time for Change, Starlet,* and *Neurons to Nirvana*. He's currently producing the soon-to-be-released films *Monogamy and Its Discontents* and *Weed the People.*

John A. Chavez is an independent researcher who has been seeking to understand the physiological changes that coincide with a supernatural occurrence that he experienced in 2013. He describes himself as a former admitted materialist who failed to believe anything out of modern, measurable science could be quantified as real. He now believes that a deeper understanding of the endogenous human hallucinatory system can possibly provide answers to very important and profound questions. He holds a B.S. degree from San Francisco State University in business management.

Carina Cooper is a certified Riso-Hudson Enneagram teacher. She has been a documentary film maker for the BBC and WNET in New York, screenplay writer, food writer, journalist, and author of three cookbooks. She was a columnist for the *London Evening Standard* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazine and has contributed to many international publications. Intertwining the paths of psychology and spirituality, Carina now uses the Enneagram to help people know themselves, discover their virtues and gifts of their type, and to help them recognize their negative patterns, beliefs, and habits. She lives between London and Ibiza, where she is starting to be an almond farmer.

Vimal Darpan weaves thirty years of experience in music, healing, and the shamanic arts to create a unique transmission that inspires, enlivens, and transforms. His home is in Australia where he is renowned as a teacher, musician, and healer. Bringing people together to create an unambiguous experience of our common Source is the intention that inspires his work. A skillful blend of ceremony, song, meditation, and celebration are the means by which he achieves the goal. Darpan is a spontaneous and engaging speaker with a natural flair for embellishing his talks with interesting stories, anecdotal references, and rich personal experience. He delivers a wealth of information within a context that inspires and motivates. His passion is creating positive change by initiating vision and awakening new perspectives. Darpan is currently working on a book that references his many years of experience in the shamanic/healing arts and is available to deliver talks, concerts, seminars, and workshops anywhere in the world.

Ede Frecska is chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. He received his medical degree in 1977 from the Semmelweis University in Hungary. He then earned qualifications as certified psychologist from the Department of Psychology at Lorand Eotvos University in Budapest. Dr. Frecska completed his residency training in psychiatry both in Hungary (1986) and in the United States (1992). He is a qualified psychopharmacologist (1987) of international merit with seventeen years of clinical and research experience in the United States. During his early academic years, Dr. Frecska's studies were devoted to research on schizophrenia and affective illness. He published more than fifty scientific papers and book chapters on these topics. In his recent research he is engaged in studies on psychointegrator plants and techniques. He is particularly interested in the physiological role of endohallucinogen compounds (DMT, 5MeO-DMT, and bufotenin). Dr. Frecska is a member of several professional organizations (APA, ECNP, CINP), and has received grants and awards from a variety of sources (NARSAD, NIAA).

Guy Harriman went to medical school at the age of eighteen but dropped out and built music synthesizers, later studying electronics and becoming a chip designer for twenty-three years. He worked for Steve Jobs at NeXT for four years, then six years at director level at Cisco, as well as eight other

start-ups. Guy retired from the corporate world in 2002, and focused on teaching yoga, as well as working as a therapist. He moved from Silicon Valley to Chiang Mai in 2008 and built his lannayoga.com Healing Center. Guy is the inventor of the spiritual tool called the Ajna Light in 2014, and as of 2017 it is estimated over ten thousand people have been on the Ajna Light. Using the flicker effect as well as brainwave entrainment and the neurophysiological process of pulsed melanopsin, the Ajna Light quickly entrains different states of consciousness.

Dennis McKenna has pursued interdisciplinary research in the study of Amazonian ethnopharmacology and plant hallucinogens for over thirty years. He has conducted extensive ethnobotanical fieldwork in the Peruvian, Colombian, and Brazilian Amazon, recently completing a four-year project investigating Amazonian ethnomedicines as potential treatments for cognitive deficits. His doctoral research (University of British Columbia, 1984) focused on the ethnopharmacology of ayahuasca and oo-koo-he, two tryptamine-based hallucinogens used by indigenous peoples in the Northwest Amazon. Dr. McKenna completed postdoctoral research fellowships in neurosciences in the Laboratory of Clinical Pharmacology, National Institute of Mental Health (1986–88), and in the Department of Neurology, Stanford University School of Medicine (1988–90). He joined Shaman Pharmaceuticals as director of ethnopharmacology in 1990, and subsequently joined Aveda Corporation as senior research pharmacognosist. He is currently assistant professor in the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the University of Minnesota, where he teaches courses in ethnopharmacology, botanical medicines, and plants in human affairs. He is a founding board member of the Heffter Research Institute, a nonprofit research organization focused on the development of therapeutic applications for psychedelic medicines. He was a key organizer and participant in the Hoasca Project, the first biomedical investigation of ayahuasca used sacramentally by the UDV, a Brazilian religious sect. Dr. McKenna is author or co-author of four books and over fifty scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Jerry D. Patchen, a Houston, Texas, attorney brings four decades of experience and wisdom to the courtroom as a trial lawyer having litigated

civil and criminal cases in twenty-five states and various foreign jurisdictions. Jerry's work includes forty years of pro bono representation of the Native American Church (NAC) on behalf of American Indians to secure and protect their rights to religious freedom. Serving as an officer in the NAC, he represented individuals charged in various states with possession of peyote, winning every case. He also represented the peyote dealers in Texas who are licensed by the Texas DPS and DEA to dispense peyote to Indians. Throughout his representation of the NAC, Jerry, his wife, Linda, and their three children participated in peyote meetings with Native American elders for decades.

Jerry created the strategy of requesting the U.S. Congress to enact the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and to amend the American Indian Religious Freedom Act to ensure continued religious use of peyote by the NAC. For his efforts on behalf of Native American Indians, Jerry was awarded the distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award by the State Bar of Texas. He was on the legal team representing the União do Vegetal (UDV) that successfully secured their right to use their sacrament, ayahuasca, in the United States. Jerry was formerly counsel and a founding director of the Heffter Research Institute. Jerry, with Linda's presence and guidance, serves on the Board of Integral Transformative Practice International (ITPI), the Wasiwaska Advisory Board, and they are active supporters of Esalen and the Houston Jung Center.

Patrick Vernon is part-owner of GrainLabs, a film and documentary production company and has himself been involved in the Oscar-nominated documentary *Virunga,* amongst others. He is also a philanthropist and an investor in the wider market. Currently he is funding a study at Imperial that looks to explore what is happening in the brain while a person is under the influence of DMT, through the use of fMRI neuroimaging.

Judith Way is a visionary artist, yoga teacher, and received a distinction under Angela Voss on the M.A. in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred at Canterbury Christ Church University, with a thesis on "Enrichment and Enchantment: The Poetic Heritage of the Western Esoteric Tradition," a version of which was published as part of the *Re-enchanting the Academy* (2017) anthology.

Editor and Symposium Curator Biographies

Anton Bilton (Host) is an economics graduate from The City University in London. He was the founder of The Raven Group and has also been a founder and director of three other companies that have floated on the London stock exchange's Alternative Investment Market (AIM). He is currently executive deputy chairman of Raven Russia Limited. Outside of his working environment, Anton's principal interest is altered states of consciousness and entheogenic plant sentience.

David Luke, Ph.D., (Moderator/Curator) is associate professor of psychology at the University of Greenwich where he has been teaching an undergraduate course on the Psychology of Exceptional Human Experience since 2009, and he is also honorary senior lecturer at the Centre for Psychedelic Research, Imperial College. His research focuses on transpersonal experiences, anomalous phenomena, and altered states of consciousness, especially via psychedelics, having published more than one hundred academic papers in this area, including ten books, most recently *Otherworlds: Psychedelics and Exceptional Human Experience* (2nd ed., 2019). When he is not running clinical drug trials with LSD, conducting DMT field experiments, or observing apparent weather control with Mexican shamans he directs the Ecology, Cosmos, and Consciousness salon at the Institute of Ecotechnics, London, and is a co-founder and director of Breaking Convention: International Conference on Psychedelic Consciousness. He has given over three hundred invited public lectures and conference presentations; won teaching, research, and writing awards; organized numerous festivals, conferences, symposia, seminars, retreats, expeditions, pagan cabarets, and pilgrimages; and has studied techniques of consciousness alteration from South America to India, from the perspective

of scientists, shamans, and Shivaites. He lives life on the edge of Sussex, UK.

Rory Spowers (Curator/Coordinator) is an ecological writer, campaigner, and filmmaker who moved from mid-Wales to Sri Lanka in 2004 and has been living in Ibiza since 2012, where he first went to work with BBC presenter Bruce Parry on the feature film *Quest*. Rory's last book, *A Year in Green Tea and Tuk Tuks,* covers the creation of Samakanda "Bio-versity," an ecological learning center in south Sri Lanka. His previous book *Rising Tides* was a history of ecological thought and was critically acclaimed by the UK *Sunday Times,* the *Observer,* and a variety of magazines. Rory's first book, *Three Men on a Bike,* follows a bizarre cycling trip through Africa with friends on the original three-seater *trandem* used by *The Goodies* on BBC TV in the 1970s. In 2002, Rory founded The Web of Hope, a UK charity and ecological education resource highlighting role models for sustainability, social justice, and positive change, now part of Sustainapedia. Most recently, he has been working with Mangu TV promoting documentary films such as *Neurons to Nirvana—Understanding Psychedelic Medicines*. He is the creative director for The Tyringham Project.

Footnotes

*1 Sadly John died in January 2019 at the age of ninety-six.

*2 The presented material is a version of the original lecture given over the last decade or so. Parts of it, in different forms, appeared in Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); and Whitley Strieber and Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Super Natural: A New Vision of the Unexplained* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2016).

About the Editors

David Luke, Ph.D., is associate lecturer of psychology at the University of Greenwich and honorary senior lecturer at the Centre for Psychedelic Research, Imperial College. He has published more than 100 academic papers on transpersonal experiences and altered states of consciousness and regularly gives public lectures and conference presentations. A cofounder and director of Breaking Convention, a biennial international conference on psychedelic research, he lives in East Sussex, England.

Rory Spowers is an ecological writer, filmmaker, and author. He is the founder of the Web of Hope, a UK charity and ecological education resource, and the creative director for the Tyringham Initiative. He lives in Ibiza, Spain.